



The Newborn Care Guide

*Feeding • Diapers • Sleep • Bonding
in the first weeks of life*



*You don't have to navigate this alone. This guide offers general
newborn care information — always follow your pediatrician's guidance
for anything specific to your baby.*

SECTION ONE

How Much Should a Newborn Eat?

Feeding needs grow quickly in the first weeks — here's what's typical.

Every baby feeds a little differently, and breastfed babies especially will vary in ounces since milk transfer is harder to measure than a bottle. The table below is a general guide for approximate amounts per feeding, not a strict target.

Age	Amount per Feeding	Feedings per Day
Day 1–2	1/2 – 1 oz (colostrum, small amounts)	8–12
Days 3–6	1 – 2 oz	8–12
Weeks 2–4	2 – 3 oz	8–12
Months 1–2	3 – 4 oz	7–9
Months 2–4	4 – 5 oz	6–8

A Note for Breastfeeding Families

Feed on cues, not just the clock

Breastfed newborns typically feed 8–12 times in 24 hours, following hunger cues (rooting, hands to mouth, smacking lips) rather than a fixed schedule. It's hard to know exactly how many ounces baby is transferring at the breast — steady weight gain and wet/dirty diaper counts are usually better indicators than volume.

In general, expect a growth spurt around 2–3 weeks, 6 weeks, and 3 months, when baby may want to eat more frequently for a few days. This is normal and typically settles back into a rhythm within a few days.

SECTION TWO

How Many Wet Diapers Are Normal?

Diaper counts are one of the best signs that feeding is going well.

Baby's Age	Wet Diapers per Day
Day 1	1
Day 2	2
Day 3	3
Day 4	4–6
Day 5 and beyond	6 or more

By about day 5, most babies should be having at least 6 heavy, pale yellow wet diapers every 24 hours. Urine that looks pink or brick-colored (sometimes called 'brick dust') in the first few days can be normal urate crystals, but it shouldn't continue past day 4–5.

When to call your pediatrician

Fewer than the expected number of wet diapers for baby's age, very dark or strong-smelling urine, or no wet diaper in an 8–10 hour stretch are reasons to reach out to your pediatrician or a lactation professional promptly.

SECTION THREE

What Is Meconium?

The first stool your newborn will pass — and what comes after.

Meconium is baby's very first bowel movement. It's made up of everything baby absorbed in the womb — amniotic fluid, skin cells, and other material — rather than digested milk.

- **Appearance:** Thick, sticky, tar-like, and dark green to black in color.
- **Timing:** Most babies pass their first meconium stool within 24–48 hours of birth.
- **Transition:** Over the next several days, stools change from black meconium, to a greenish-brown 'transitional' stool, to the seedy, mustard-yellow stool typical of a breastfed baby (or a tan/brown, more formed stool for a formula-fed baby) by about day 4–5.
- **Why it matters:** The transition from meconium to milk stool is a helpful sign that baby is digesting milk well and feeding is establishing.

When to call your pediatrician

If meconium hasn't passed within the first 24–48 hours, or if stools haven't transitioned to yellow/seedy (breastfed) or tan/brown (formula-fed) by about day 5, let your pediatrician know.

SECTION FOUR

How Long Should a Newborn Sleep?

Newborn sleep is a lot — just not in the stretches new parents expect.

Newborns typically sleep 14 to 17 hours across a 24-hour day, but in short stretches of 2 to 4 hours at a time, waking often to feed. Their internal clock (circadian rhythm) hasn't developed yet, so there's no real difference between day and night sleep for the first several weeks.

Age	Total Sleep (24 hrs)	Typical Stretch Length
0–2 weeks	16–17 hours	2–4 hours
2–4 weeks	15–16 hours	2–4 hours
1–2 months	14–16 hours	3–5 hours

Safe sleep basics: always place baby on their back, on a firm flat surface, in a crib or bassinet free of blankets, pillows, and bumpers, for every sleep — naps included.

Frequent night waking in the newborn stage is developmentally expected, not a sign anything is wrong. Longer, more predictable stretches tend to emerge gradually over the first few months.

SECTION FIVE

How to Interact With a Newborn

Bonding doesn't require anything fancy — baby is wired to connect with you.

- **Skin-to-skin contact:** Holding baby chest-to-chest, especially in the early weeks, supports bonding, temperature regulation, and can even help ease fussiness.
- **Eye contact and facial expression:** Newborns see best at 8–12 inches — about the distance to your face during feeding. Smiling, widening your eyes, and slowly sticking out your tongue invite baby to mimic you.
- **Talk, sing, and narrate:** Baby doesn't understand the words yet, but the rhythm, tone, and repetition of your voice supports language development and is deeply soothing.
- **Respond to cues:** Rooting, fussing, yawning, and turning away are all forms of communication. Responding consistently helps baby learn that their needs are heard.
- **Tummy time:** A few short, supervised sessions a day while baby is awake and alert build neck and shoulder strength for the milestones ahead.
- **Follow baby's lead:** Newborns can get overstimulated quickly. Watch for cues like turning away, arching, or fussiness, which may mean it's time for a quieter moment together.

Remember

There's no single 'right' way to bond with your baby. Some connection happens in big moments, and a lot of it happens in the ordinary ones — a feeding, a diaper change, a walk. You are exactly the parent your baby needs to learn from.

This guide offers general information and isn't a substitute for individualized medical advice. If anything about your baby's feeding, output, sleep, or behavior worries you, trust your instincts and reach out to your pediatrician or a member of your care team.

SOURCES

For Further Reading

This guide draws on general guidance from the following pediatric and public health sources.

Feeding amounts and frequency

American Academy of Pediatrics — “How Often and How Much Should Your Baby Eat?”, [HealthyChildren.org](https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/feeding-nutrition/Pages/how-often-and-how-much-should-your-baby-eat.aspx)
[healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/feeding-nutrition/Pages/how-often-and-how-much-should-your-baby-eat.aspx](https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/feeding-nutrition/Pages/how-often-and-how-much-should-your-baby-eat.aspx)

Formula feeding amounts and schedule

American Academy of Pediatrics — “Amount and Schedule of Baby Formula Feedings,” [HealthyChildren.org](https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/formula-feeding/Pages/amount-and-schedule-of-formula-feedings.aspx)
[healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/formula-feeding/Pages/amount-and-schedule-of-formula-feedings.aspx](https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/formula-feeding/Pages/amount-and-schedule-of-formula-feedings.aspx)

Wet diaper counts

American Academy of Pediatrics — “How Often and How Much Should Your Baby Eat?”, [HealthyChildren.org](https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/feeding-nutrition/Pages/how-often-and-how-much-should-your-baby-eat.aspx)
[healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/feeding-nutrition/Pages/how-often-and-how-much-should-your-baby-eat.aspx](https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/feeding-nutrition/Pages/how-often-and-how-much-should-your-baby-eat.aspx)

Meconium and stool transition

[HealthyChildren.org](https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/Pages/babys-first-days-bowel-movements-and-urination.aspx) — “Baby’s First Days: Bowel Movements & Urination”
[healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/Pages/babys-first-days-bowel-movements-and-urination.aspx](https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/Pages/babys-first-days-bowel-movements-and-urination.aspx)

Newborn sleep duration and patterns

[HealthyChildren.org](https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/sleep/Pages/default.aspx) — “Sleep”; [Stanford Medicine Children’s Health](https://stanfordchildrens.org/en/topic/default?id=infant-sleep-90-P02237) — “Infant Sleep”
[healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/sleep/Pages/default.aspx](https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/sleep/Pages/default.aspx) •
stanfordchildrens.org/en/topic/default?id=infant-sleep-90-P02237

Safe sleep guidelines

American Academy of Pediatrics — [Safe Sleep recommendations](https://www.aap.org/en/patient-care/safe-sleep/), [AAP.org](https://www.aap.org/en/patient-care/safe-sleep/)
[aap.org/en/patient-care/safe-sleep/](https://www.aap.org/en/patient-care/safe-sleep/)

Newborn sleep stretch length (early weeks)

[Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia](https://www.chop.edu/primary-care/healthy-sleep-habits) — “Healthy Sleep Habits”
[chop.edu/primary-care/healthy-sleep-habits](https://www.chop.edu/primary-care/healthy-sleep-habits)

Bonding, cues, and newborn interaction

[Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia](https://www.chop.edu/pages/newborn-sleep-patterns) — “Newborn-Sleep Patterns” (cues & responsive care); [HealthyChildren.org](https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby), *Ages & Stages: Baby*
[chop.edu/pages/newborn-sleep-patterns](https://www.chop.edu/pages/newborn-sleep-patterns) • [healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby](https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby)

This guide is intended as general educational information only and does not replace personalized medical advice from your baby’s pediatrician or a qualified lactation professional.