

Nutrition



Nutrition

How Much and How Often to Breastfeed

Every baby is different. How much and how often your baby feeds will depend on your baby's needs. Here are a few things to expect about breastfeeding during the baby's first days, weeks, and months of life.

First Days

- Your newborn baby's belly is tiny. He or she does not need a lot of milk with each feeding to be full.
- Your baby may want to eat as often as every 1 to 3 hours. Frequent feeding helps increase your milk supply and gives your baby practice at sucking and swallowing.
- You may be able to hear your baby sucking and swallowing the breast milk.
- Most babies who are getting breast milk should not be fed infant formula in the first few days. If you are concerned about meeting your baby's needs, talk to a [lactation consultant, or your baby's nurse or doctor](#), right away. They can help you address any breastfeeding problems and determine the best way to meet your baby's needs.



Did You Know?


Some newborns may be sleepy and not interested in feeding.

At first, babies need to eat about every 2 to 4 hours to help them get enough nutrition and to grow.

This means you may need to wake your baby to feed. You can try patting, stroking, undressing, or changing the diaper to help wake your baby.

If you have concerns about how much your baby is sleeping or eating, talk to his or her doctor or nurse.

First Weeks and Months

- As babies grow, their bellies also grow. Your baby will gradually be able to drink more breast milk at each feeding.
- Over the first few weeks and months, the time between feedings will start to get longer. On average, most [exclusively breastfed](#)  babies will feed about every 2 to 4 hours. Some babies may feed as often as every hour at times, often called cluster feeding. Or may have a longer sleep interval of 4 to 5 hours.
- How often your baby feeds might change depending on the time of day. Some feeding sessions may be long, and others short. That is okay. Babies will generally take what they need at each feeding and stop eating when they are full. They should seem content and drowsy after feeding when they have had enough milk.
- Your baby will breastfeed about 8 to 12 times in 24 hours.

6 to 12 Months

- How long and how often babies breastfeed will change as they grow and start eating more [solid foods](#).
- Continue to follow your baby's cues and breastfeed when you notice [signs of hunger](#). This is sometimes called breastfeeding on demand.
- If your baby seems less interested in breastfeeding after you introduce solid foods, try breastfeeding before you offer other foods.
- Your breast milk is the most important source of nutrition, even after you start feeding your baby solid foods.

12 to 24 Months

- The number of times a day a toddler breastfeeds varies. Some want to breastfeed only before bed or in the morning. Others continue to drink breast milk as a bigger portion of their daily diet. Continue to follow your child's cues to decide when he or she is hungry and wants to breastfeed.

Page last reviewed: April 11, 2022