

Breastfeeding behaviours

Each mother and baby pair are unique. Learning your baby's cues and trusting your instincts will guide you to what he or she needs.

Crying is your baby's way of communicating with you. It is an effective way to alert you that they need to be fed, or require attention or comfort.

It is important to respond quickly to hunger cues in the first few weeks of your baby's life.

Your baby may be hungry when he or she:

- Puts fingers in their mouth
- Turns their head in a seeking manner
- Wakes up

What to expect:

Day 1:

- > Your baby will have initial alertness for about 2 hours and may show an eagerness to feed 2-3 times during this alert phase.
- > It is common for baby to then sleep 6-7 hours after feeding on this first day. This allows your baby to conserve energy and grow.
- > Your baby's stomach capacity is equivalent to the size of a small marble 1-2cm in diameter, this will increase over the first week as the baby starts to feed more effectively and the milk supply increases.
- > 3-7mls of Colostrum is the average volume per feed during the first day.
- > Expect at least one wet nappy in the first 24 hours.
- > Your baby will pass thick tarry black bowel motions (meconium) in the first 24-48 hours.

Day 2 - 3:

- > Baby will have alert periods over the next 2-3 days and may be a little fussy while feeding.
- > A baby breastfeeding frequently will help your milk volume to increase quickly and reduce the risk of engorged (over full) breasts.
- > Your baby may be more awake at night than during the day. During the day maybe a good time to rest while baby is

sleeping.

- > Expect at least 2-3 wet nappies during this time. It is common to find a reddish residue in the nappy. This is called urates and is caused by uric acid crystals. This will go away as the baby feeds more effectively. Urates present on day 4-5, is usually a sign that baby is not getting enough milk.
- > Bowel motions are softer and will change in colour from black to dark green

After the milk comes in

Day 4 – 6:

- > Milk volume in the breast is starting to increase at this time.
- > Baby's swallow pattern should be more consistent and rhythmical.
- > Bowel motions should be brownish-green to mustard colour. There should be at least 3- 4 bowel motions per day.
- > Urine should be pale in colour and increase to 5-6 times a day. Nappies should be heavier as the baby will be passing larger amounts of urine.



Day 7 - 10

Baby's stomach is now the size of his or her tiny fist.

Baby will demand frequent feeds.

Bowel motions are loose and yellow. There should be at least 3 – 4 a day.

5 – 6 pale wet nappies a day

Once the milk supply begins to establish

It is normal to expect your baby to lose some weight in the first few days. Baby should be back to birth weight by approximately 2 weeks old.

Expect at least 5 – 6 wet nappies a day.

Baby should have 3 – 4 yellow loose bowel motions a day in the first month then bowel motions may be less frequent but are always loose in consistency.

Your baby will become more efficient sucking at the breast and may only take 10-20 minutes to feed as they grow and get stronger.

Normal behaviour once milk supply is established

You will hear your baby swallow as he or she suckles consistently and rhythmically.

Your baby is alert and vigorous at the breast.

Breastfeeding works by supply and demand. Feeding more frequently will help increase your milk supply. Baby suckles at the breast when he or she is hungry.

It is normal for a breastfed baby to demand 8-12 feeds in 24 hours and cluster feeding is common. This is when babies have an unsettled period when they will fuss and cry and want to feed frequently.

Baby can be more wakeful at night.

Baby should soften the first breast thoroughly. Offer the second breast but your baby may not always drink from the second breast.

Young babies have little idea of day or night and will wake around the clock to feed and have their needs met

Resources

Australian Breastfeeding Association

Child and Family Health Services

Women's and Children's Health Network

References

- > Breastfeeding and Human Lactation- Riordan and Wambach
- > www.breastfeeding.asn.au
- > Breastfeeding Management in Australia 4th Ed, 2012 – Wendy Brodribb
- > www.cyh.com
- > Making More Milk – Diana West and Lisa Marasco
- > Parenting By Heart – Pinky McKay



This document has been reviewed and endorsed by WCHN consumers August 2018

For more information

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