

HOW TO KNOW IF YOUR BREASTFED BABY IS GETTING ENOUGH MILK

- Your baby may have only one or two wet diapers during the first day or two after birth. Beginning about the third or fourth day, your baby will increase the number of wet diapers. After that, he should have at least five to six really wet diapers per day.
- Your baby will pass meconium, the greenish-black, tarry first stool, over the first day or two. By the third day, the color will change to a greenish transitional stool. Baby will begin having at least three to five bowel movements a day beginning about the third day after birth. By the fifth day, these will typically be very loose and bright yellow in color. The amount should be at least the size of a US quarter (2.5 cm.).
- Your baby may lose up to seven percent of his/her birth weight during the first three or four days. Once your milk supply becomes more plentiful on the third or fourth day, expect your baby to begin gaining weight. He should regain his birth weight by the time he is 10 to 14 days old. After that most breastfed babies gain an average of six ounces (170 grams) per week or a pound and a half (680 grams) a month for the first four months.
- Your baby will breastfeed frequently, often every one-and-a-half to three hours, averaging about eight to twelve times in 24 hours. Frequent breastfeeding in the early days helps to establish a mother's milk supply.
- Some babies "cluster nurse," which means they nurse very often for a few hours and then sleep for several hours. Feedings are not always spaced at regular intervals.
- Follow baby's feeding cues and do not try to schedule feedings. Crying is considered a late hunger cue.
- You know your baby is getting enough milk when you can see that he looks healthy, his color is good, his skin is firm, he is filling out and growing in length and head circumference, and he is alert and active.

IF YOU NEED TO INCREASE YOUR MILK SUPPLY

- Get help. If your baby is not gaining well, or if he is losing weight after the first few days, contact someone who is knowledgeable about breastfeeding. Often, a La Leche League Leader or other breastfeeding specialist can help you improve your breastfeeding techniques and quickly resolve the situation. You will also need to be in close touch with your baby's doctor, because in some cases slow weight gain may indicate a serious health problem.
- Nurse frequently for as long as your baby will nurse. A sleepy baby may need to be awakened and encouraged to nurse more frequently. Frequent breastfeeding helps to establish a plentiful milk supply. The more often the breasts are stimulated the more milk they will produce.
- Offer both breasts at each feeding. This will ensure that your baby gets all the milk available and that both breasts are stimulated frequently. Allow your baby to indicate he is finished on the first breast, then offer the other breast. Do not try to limit the length of feedings.
- Be sure that baby is positioned correctly and latched on well. Baby's lips should be on the areola (dark area surrounding the nipple), well behind the nipple. You should be able to hear your baby swallow. If you are not sure baby is sucking well, or if you feel any nipple soreness when baby is nursing, ask your La Leche League Leader or other breastfeeding specialist to help you.
- Try breast compression to keep your baby interested in nursing. Squeeze the breast firmly with your thumb on one side and fingers on the other to increase milk flow. Keep squeezing until baby is no longer actively sucking; then release. Rotate fingers around the breast and squeeze again. Then switch to the other breast, using both breasts twice at each feeding. Squeeze firmly but be careful not to cause injury to your breast tissue.

- Give your baby only human milk. If your baby has been receiving formula supplements, do not cut these out abruptly. As you improve your breastfeeding techniques, and your milk supply increases, you will be able to gradually reduce the amount of supplement. But you need to watch baby's wet and soiled diapers to be sure he is getting enough milk. Monitor baby's weight gain and stay in touch with your baby's doctor.
- All your baby's sucking should be at the breast. If some supplement is necessary temporarily, it can be given by spoon, cup, or with a nursing supplementer, a device used to feed baby additional milk through a small tube while he nurses at the breast.
- Pay attention to your own need for rest, relaxation, proper diet, and sufficient fluids. Taking care of yourself will help your milk supply and improve your general sense of well-being.
- Consider taking medicinal herbs or prescription medications to increase your milk supply. Many mothers find that medicinal herbs can have a positive effect on their milk supply. Consult someone who is knowledgeable before using these on your own.
- If you have any further questions or concerns be sure to get in touch with your La Leche League Leader (800-LALECHE or www.lalecheleague.org), a board certified lactation consultant (www.ILCA.org), or other breastfeeding specialist. Remember that a baby who is not gaining weight will need to be checked regularly by a doctor.

FALSE ALARMS

Some mothers think their babies are not getting enough milk when they are actually getting plenty of milk. Some "false alarms" that worry mothers include:

- Your breasts suddenly appear to be soft. This happens to almost all mothers once the initial feeling of fullness subsides. It does not mean you are producing less milk; it simply means that your supply has adjusted to your baby's needs.
- Your breasts no longer leak between feedings. This is another indication that your milk supply is in tune with your baby's needs. Some mothers continue to leak even after the early months; others seldom leak. This is not related to how much milk you are producing.
- Your baby seems fussy. Many babies have a fussy time every day that is not related to hunger. Some babies need lots of stimulation and activity; others need soothing and gentleness. You will learn how to respond

to your own baby as you find the ways that comfort him. If your fussy baby settles down when you offer him the breast, go ahead and nurse him. But don't take this as a sign that he is not getting enough to eat.

- Your baby suddenly wants to nurse more often or seems hungry again soon after being fed. Babies often go through "growth spurts" when they are 2 to 3 weeks old and again at 6 weeks and at 3 months. At these times they seem to want to nurse more often for a few days. It is believed that this is a way for your baby to increase your milk supply to meet his needs.
- Your baby suddenly decreases his nursing time, perhaps down to five minutes or so at each breast. As babies get older, they become very efficient at taking the milk so this is a positive sign that breastfeeding is going well, not something to worry about.

Mothers throughout the ages have been able to produce plenty of milk for their babies. In certain unusual situations because of a health problem or other complication, a mother may have a reason to be concerned and may need to carefully monitor her baby's weight gain in order to be sure he is getting enough milk. Being in touch with La Leche League can often provide the information, support, and encouragement that mothers need to be reassured that they are providing plenty of milk for their babies.

For breastfeeding information contact: