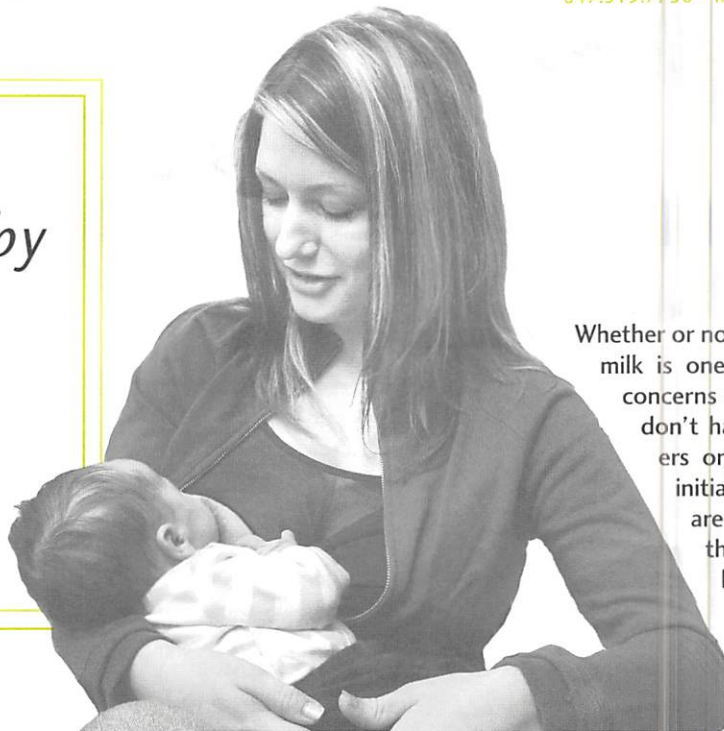




Is my breastfed baby getting enough milk?



Whether or not baby is getting enough milk is one of the most common concerns of new moms. Since we don't have measurement markers on our breasts, we can't initially "see" that our babies are really getting the milk they need. You can tell baby is getting enough milk, however, by keeping track of dirty diapers, weight gain, and appearance.

How often are you breastfeeding?

A baby needs to breastfeed frequently. Your milk is digested quickly and easily, sometimes in as little as 60 minutes, and small amounts are perfect for baby's tiny stomach. These frequent feedings also help to establish your milk supply. In simple terms, the more milk that is removed from your breasts, the more milk your body will produce. Frequent feedings are good for both of you!

- A newborn should feed at least eight to 12 times in a 24-hour period.
- Allow baby to determine the length of feedings: 10 to 20 minutes per breast or longer.
- Keep in mind that some babies "cluster nurse," which means they nurse very often for a few hours and then sleep for several hours. The number of feedings in a 24-hour period is more important than the spacing of feedings.
- A sleepy baby may need to be wakened every two to three hours to feed, particularly if he has jaundice. Talk with your health care provider if baby is lethargic and difficult to wake for feedings.

Weight Gain

Your baby may lose up to seven percent of his birth weight during the first three or four days. Once your milk "comes in," expect your baby to begin gaining weight. He should regain his birth weight by the time he is 10 to 14 days old.

age	weight gain (per week)
0-3 months	4-7 ounces (110-200 grams)
4-6 months	4-5 ounces (110-140 grams)
6-12 months	2-4 ounces (60-110 grams)

Appearance

You also know your baby is getting enough milk by noting the following:

- Baby's color is good.
- Baby's skin is firm.
- Baby is filling out and growing in length and head circumference.
- Baby is active and alert.

Diapers

Counting your baby's diapers can be a helpful indicator as to whether or not he is getting enough of your milk.

baby's age	mother's milk	wet diapers/24 hrs	dirty diapers/24 hrs
1-2 days	colostrum (provides immunities and helps with jaundice)	1-2	greenish-black tarry meconium
2-6 days	milk "comes in"; bluish color	5-6 wet disposable diapers (6-8 wet cloth diapers)	At least 3 greenish transitional stools
6+ days	milk supply adjusts to suit your baby's needs	Same as 2-6 days	At least 3-5 very loose stools; bright yellow color that are about 2.5 cm
6 weeks	milk supply established	Same as 2-6 days	Some babies switch to less frequent but large bowel movements



Let baby lead!

Watch your baby for signs of hunger, not the clock. Follow baby's feeding cues and do not try to schedule feedings or limit feedings. Early hunger cues include:

- Baby opening his mouth and moving his head side to side (known as the rooting reflex).
- Baby making sucking motions with his mouth.
- Baby begins to chew or suck on his hands or fingers.

Don't wait for your baby to cry to let you know he is hungry. Crying is a very late hunger cue.

Increasing Your Milk Supply

Mothers throughout the ages have been able to produce plenty of milk for their babies. In certain 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. If baby is not gaining well or he is losing weight after the first few days, contact baby's health care provider. Slow weight gain may indicate a serious health problem. If you're concerned about your milk supply, get help. Being in touch with a La Leche League Leader can often provide the information, support, and encouragement that mothers need to be reassured that they are providing plenty of milk for their babies. Steps that will help your baby get as much of your milk as possible include:

Nurse often for as long as your baby will nurse. The more milk that is removed from the breast, the more milk the breast will make to replace it. Frequent breastfeeding helps to establish a plentiful milk supply. A sleepy baby may need to be awakened and encouraged to nurse more frequently. A baby who nurses for excessively long periods may not be nursing efficiently. If you're experiencing this, have a breastfeeding session observed by an experienced LLL Leader or lactation professional.

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.

Check baby's positioning and latch. Breastfeeding should not hurt. Hold baby close with his whole body facing you so he does not have to turn his head. When he opens his mouth wide, his head should be slightly tilted back with his nose at the level of your nipple. As he approaches the breast with his head slightly tilted back, this will bring him to the breast chin first. This will help you better aim his lower jaw so that he covers more of your breast with his lower jaw than with his upper mouth. As you bring baby onto the breast, aim your nipple toward the roof of his mouth. If you feel comfortable and baby is nursing actively, the latch is good.

Try breast compression to keep your baby interested in breastfeeding. 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.

Feed your baby only your milk. If your baby has been receiving formula supplements, do not cut these out abruptly. As you improve your breastfeeding techniques with the help of a lactation professional, and as your milk supply increases, you will be able to gradually reduce the amount of supplement. Monitor baby's weight gain and stay in touch with your baby's health care provider during this transition.

All your baby's sucking should be at the breast. If some supplement is necessary, it can be given by spoon, cup, or with a nursing supplementer. Be aware that a pacifier can create more problems than it solves. If you decide to give your baby a pacifier, wait until he is nursing effectively and gaining well.

Use skin-to-skin contact. It may encourage your baby to nurse more often. Skin-to-skin means that baby will be nestled upright between your breasts, clad in only his diaper directly against your skin. Your warmth, smell, and heartbeat will also soothe baby, which in turn aids in his development.

Try to relax. Paying attention to your need for rest, relaxation, and proper diet will help your milk supply and improve your general sense of well-being.

Talk to your health care provider about medicinal herbs or prescription medications to increase your milk supply. A La Leche League Leader can provide resources with information about herbs and medication.

La Leche League Leaders are accredited volunteers who are available to help with breastfeeding questions in person, over the phone, or online. Locate an LLL Leader near you at www.llli.org.

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 feel different. If your breasts suddenly feel softer or your breasts no longer leak between feedings, it does not mean you are producing less milk; it simply means that your supply has adjusted to your baby's needs.

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

Baby suddenly wants to feed more often, or seems hungry again soon after being fed. Babies often go through "growth spurts" when they are two to three weeks old and again at six weeks and at three months. At these times, breastfeed as often as possible as your supply catches up with baby's demand.

Baby 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.

ESTABLISHING YOUR MILK SUPPLY

A baby's need for milk and his mother's ability to produce it in just the right quantity have been said to be one of nature's most perfect examples of the law of supply and demand. Until the advent of mass produced artificial formula, the very survival of the human race depended largely on a mother's ability to produce a sufficient quantity of milk to adequately nourish her baby. Establishing and maintaining an ample milk supply is easy when you understand how the milk supply is regulated and what kinds of things are likely to upset the balance between the amount of milk the baby needs and the amount of milk that is produced.

The more the baby nurses, the more milk there will be. This is the key to an abundant milk supply and a contented baby. Milk is produced almost continuously, and the more often the baby nurses, the more milk there will be. Frequent nursing and effective sucking signal the mother's body to produce the amount of milk her baby needs.

Nursing early and often is one of the most important factors in getting breastfeeding off to a good start. Mothers who are permitted to nurse their babies at frequent, unrestricted intervals following birth are more likely to have a good milk supply sooner than mothers who are allowed to nurse only on a restricted feeding schedule.

Newborns usually nurse about every two hours, or at least eight to 12 times per day. This frequent nursing provides a wonderful source of comfort as well as nutrition for the newborn, and helps assure that the mother's milk supply will quickly become well established.

Allow the baby to nurse as long as he seems interested, right from the start. Mothers are sometimes advised to limit nursing to five minutes or less during the first week in order to avoid sore nipples. However, it may take the milk two or three minutes to "let down," or start to flow, especially in the beginning, so limiting nursing to five minutes may mean the feeding is over almost before it has begun. A baby needs to nurse long enough to get the hindmilk, the milk that comes toward the end of a feeding that is rich and creamy and high in calories.

Offer both breasts at each feeding, especially in the early weeks. A newborn should be nursing on each breast at least every two to three hours (except for, perhaps, one longer stretch at night) during the time when the milk supply is becoming established. Nurse him until he seems satisfied on the first breast (at least 10 to 15 minutes), then offer the second breast. Next feeding, reverse the order offering the last-used breast first.

Be sure the baby is sucking effectively. In order to draw the milk out and stimulate the breasts to produce more, the baby needs to have a large mouthful of breast tissue. Hold your baby in a comfortable position at the level of your nipple with his whole body facing you, being sure that he doesn't have to turn his head or strain to hold onto the nipple. Wait for the baby to open his mouth very wide, then pull him in close to your breast with your nipple far back in his mouth. The baby who is a "cliff hanger" and chews on the end of the nipple instead of milking the breast will get less milk for his efforts, with a correspondingly smaller amount of milk being produced for the next feeding. Sore nipples may also be a byproduct of improper positioning at the breast.

Continue to nurse as often as your baby indicates the need. Keep in mind that since human milk is perfectly suited to your baby, it will be digested more rapidly and completely than cow's milk (formula), so your breastfed baby will be ready to eat again sooner than his bottle-fed counterpart. Remember the law of supply and demand that is at work here—the more often the baby nurses, the more milk your body will produce.

If you find that your baby regularly sleeps more than three hours between feedings, he may need to be awakened for feedings at least every two hours during the day until your milk supply is well established.

If the baby begins to nurse less frequently, there will be a corresponding drop in milk production. A mother may find her breasts overfull if the baby nurses less often than usual. Hand-expressing the excess milk will make you more comfortable, should you find yourself in this situation. If nursings continue to be spaced farther and farther apart or if the baby nurses less vigorously or for a shorter period of time at each feeding, the milk supply will diminish. The law of supply and demand also works in reverse: the less often the baby nurses, the less milk there will be.

How do I know my baby is getting enough to eat? Sometimes a mother finds herself thinking that her baby is nursing "all the time," and wonders if this means that she doesn't have enough milk to satisfy him. If he has six to eight wet cloth diapers (five to six disposables) and two to five bowel movements per day (beginning the third day after birth) and is not being given anything but your milk, you can be sure he is getting plenty of nourishment. An older baby may have bowel movements less frequently, but they should be plentiful.

Growth spurts or frequency days occur from time to time as the baby goes through a period of rapid growth. Allowing him to nurse more often for two or three days will increase your milk supply to meet his needs.

Remember that newborns nurse for many reasons other than hunger. Your baby may be nursing often because he likes the feeling of security of the close body contact that comes with nursing, because he needs to satisfy his sucking need, or because he finds the sound of your heartbeat and the gentleness of your touch a great source of comfort as he adjusts to his new world.

If you have any further questions or concerns, be sure to contact your La Leche League Leader or other breastfeeding specialist. A baby who is not gaining well should be checked by a doctor.



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