



London Health Sciences Centre

Patient Information

WAKING THE SLEEPY TERM NEWBORN

Sometimes parents are faced with a baby who seems to want to sleep virtually all the time. Whatever the reason, these babies would rather sleep than eat. Newborn babies need to breastfeed at least 8 times in 24 hours.

Sometimes it is hard to tell if a sleepy baby is hungry. Did you know the following behaviours could mean your baby is hungry?

- Stirring
- Mouth opening
- Turning head towards touch (rooting)
- Stretching
- Increasing body movement
- Hands/mouth

Here are some suggestions to help your sleepy baby breastfeed:

- About 1 1/2 – 2 hours after the beginning of the last feed, try to wake your baby up. Unwrap and partially undress your baby and bring your baby close to your face and talk to him/her. Rub your baby's back. Do this for about 5 minutes.
- If your baby is still sleepy then take off all of your baby's clothing except the diaper. Place your baby skin-to-skin, tummy to tummy and with his/her head near your breast and feet towards your feet. Usually your baby will wake and begin to look for your nipple.
- Talk to your baby, massage baby's skin, and hand express a drop of your milk onto your nipple. The smell of the milk will encourage your baby to feed.
- If baby still won't waken to feed, try changing the baby's diaper. Return baby to skin-to-skin position (see above).

This won't last forever – within a week or so, most babies wake well on their own and signal you when they are ready to eat. Until your baby has regained his/her birth weight and above, make sure you keep track of the number of feeds and wet and dirty diapers. Share this information with your health care provider.

If your baby continues to be sleepy and is not feeding 8 or more times in 24 hours, please contact your health care provider right away.

References:

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