



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.

Sleepy babies who are not rooting for the breast simply will not breastfeed. Because of the nature of bottles and artificial nipples, any caregiver can force a sleepy baby to take a bottle and drink something. But even the best lactation consultant can't make a baby breastfeed if the baby is too sleepy.

Here are some suggestions to help you wake your sleepy newborn:

- 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 with his/her head near your chin and feet on your abdomen. Put a light blanket over the two of you. Usually your baby will wake and begin to look for your nipple within 20 to 30 minutes of this.
- 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 root and want to feed.
- This won't last forever – in fact, 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:

Lactation Education Consultants. 2005. Gentle Waking For Sleepy Newborns.

Reproduced by the Middlesex London Breastfeeding Coalition with minor edits and permission from Lactation Education Consultants in June 2008. Revised by the Middlesex London Breastfeeding Coalition with representation from London Health Sciences Centre, Strathroy Middlesex General Hospital, and Middlesex London Health Unit in February 2013.