



London Health Sciences Centre

Patient Information

WAKING THE SLEEPY TERM NEWBORN

Sometimes parents find their baby wants to sleep almost all the time. Whatever the reason, some 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. The following behaviours could mean your baby is hungry:

- Stirring
- Mouth opening
- Turning head towards touch (rooting)
- Stretching
- Increasing body movement
- Hands/first to 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.
- If your baby is still sleepy take off all of your baby's clothing except the diaper. Place your baby skin-to-skin, tummy to tummy and with their head near your breast. 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.

This won't last forever – within a week or so, most babies wake up on their own and signal you when they are ready to eat. Until your baby has regained their birth weight and continue to gain weight, 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:

Queensland Government (2020). Breastfeeding: Signs of Hunger. Retrieved from

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