



London Health Sciences Centre

Patient Information

Cue Based Feeding for the Formula or Mixed Fed Baby

How do I know when my baby is hungry?

Be close to your baby and watch for signs of hunger such as:

- Eyelid Moving
- Rooting (opening mouth and turning head)
- Moving arms and legs
- Bringing hands to mouth
- Making sucking motions
- Crying and fussing are late hunger cues

What should I feed my baby if not at breast?

- Your freshly expressed breastmilk
- Your previously expressed and stored breastmilk
- Pasteurized donor human milk from a human milk bank (if eligible)
- Commercially prepared formula

How often should I feed my baby?

Your baby's cues will guide how often to feed your baby and how much your baby will drink. Always respond to your baby's hunger cues and feed on demand. A minimum of 8 feeds in 24 hours is necessary for normal infant weight gain during the first few months.

How can I feed my baby when not breastfeeding?

There are different methods of feeding your baby when not breastfeeding. Your health care provider can help you decide what way works best for you. Your decision should be based on your individual situation and how comfortable you are with each feeding method. These methods include:

- Syringe/dropper feeding
- Spoon feeding
- Cup feeding
- Infant feeding tube at breast (lactation aid)
- Finger feeding with an infant feeding tube
- Bottle feeding

How do I know when my baby is in distress/discomfort during a feeding?

- Milk leaking or dribbling out of mouth
- Choking or gagging while feeding

- Gulping or swallowing quickly without taking a breath after each swallow
- Breathing fast or working hard to catch a breath
- Smacking or squeaking noises
- Squirming or struggling during the feed
- Pushing away with hands or tongue or moving head away
- Stressed look
- Skin colour change, especially around mouth and face

What do I do if my baby is showing stress cues during a feed?

- Give your baby a pause/break
- Reposition your baby
- Burp your baby

If using a bottle:

- Check the flow rate of the nipple
- Try a different type of nipple
- Tilt the bottle so that less milk is in the nipple

If your baby is still showing stress cues at most feedings, talk to your health care provider and ask them to watch a feeding.

How do I know when my baby is full?

- Falling asleep and no longer interested in feeding
- Slowing or stopping sucking
- Closing mouth
- Pushing away
- Turning away from the feeding
- Relaxed when no longer feeding

For more information about formula feeding refer to the handouts *Formula Feeding Guidelines for the Newborn and BFI Strategy for Ontario Formula Tip Sheets*.

References:

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