

Is My Baby Getting Enough Milk?

An information leaflet from the Breastfeeding Walk-in Clinic, Mater Dei Hospital. Phone: 25454445

This is one of the greatest concerns that breastfeeding mothers feel, many find it difficult to trust something they cannot see. It is extremely rare for a woman not to produce enough breast milk, the human race would not exist today if this was not so. Most women have the ability to breastfeed at least two babies so you should be able to feed quite confident about feeding one.

FEEDING PATTERNS

It is not unusual for your newborn baby to be quite sleepy for the first 24-48 hours. If you are concerned you can attempt to wake the baby but this may not actually be necessary. Ask your midwife or nurse for help. The amount of colostrum produced in the first day is only approximately 30cc (1oz) although very small this is the amount of milk a newborn baby should take.

Most babies follow this sleepy period with a very demanding period. It may feel like your baby has not stopped breastfeeding all day and night. This helps to stimulate your breast and increase the amount of milk being produced. At first your breasts will feel very soft, the same as they felt in pregnancy. After 3-6 days your milk comes in. Now you have a much larger volume of milk available at each feed and your baby may become more settled. The breasts will feel very hot, heavy and uncomfortable. This discomfort will settle within a week.

By one week of age your baby will feed between 8-12 times a day. Many babies cluster feed, taking a few feeds within a shorter period followed by a longer sleep. It is fine to leave your baby sleeping if you are giving extra feeds at other times. Do not expect your baby to have a routine; feeding is very erratic in the early weeks. An older baby (after 6 weeks) may or may not develop a routine but feeding time may shorten to around 10 minutes.

SIGNS OF GOOD FEEDING

Weight-gain is an obvious sign of good feeding. During the first 3 days of life all newborns lose weight. This may be as much as 10% of the birth weight. It then takes around two weeks to regain that weight. Ideally you should have your baby weighed by two weeks. Picking up a problem early usually makes it easier to solve. From the third week of life your baby will gain approximately 120-250g per week. Keep in mind that many charts used for weight monitoring are based on the growth

of formula fed babies. You can obtain charts based on breastfeed babies from the breastfeeding clinic or Parent craft. By six months you should expect your baby to double birth weight and triple this by one year.

Nappies – During the first 2 to 3 days you only need to expect your baby to wet his nappy once or twice in 24 hours. By one week a sure sign of feeding well is 6 to 8 wet nappies in 24 hours. Disposable nappies are extremely absorbent and it may be difficult to notice at first. Pinch the nappy from the outside many nappy brands will feel like there is gel under the outer plastic once urine has been passed. Generally by one week the nappy feels much heavier.

For the first 3 to 4 days your baby will pass me conium, which is thick, and dark in colour. After this there is a change to breast milk stools which are yellowish, watery and may look seedy. For the first 4 weeks you should expect a dirty nappy at least three times but it is not unusual to have one with every feed.

If your baby does not dirty his nappy within two days during the first three weeks this may indicate that he is not feeding well.

WARNING SIGNS OF POOR FEEDING

- Your baby seems to sleep most of the time.
- Your baby is irritable most of the time.
- There are less than six wet nappies within 24 hours.
- Your baby is passing small, dark stools five days after birth.
- Your baby's skin is very wrinkled especially on the arms and legs.
- Your baby seems to look more yellow in colour after the first weeks.
- Your baby does not develop a round face by three weeks.

If you are at all concerned check your baby's weight.