



Infant Feeding Cues



During the first 30-120 minutes after birth, your infant will be very alert, may cry vigorously, may suck greedily on his fist, and will appear very interested in his environment. Your infant's eyes will probably be open, making this an excellent opportunity for mom, dad, and baby to meet each other. Your baby will have a vigorous suck reflex at this time, creating a great opportunity for you to breastfeed. Your baby's doctor and/or nurse will be glad to allow you to breastfeed if your baby is adapting well to life outside of the womb.

If mom or baby's condition doesn't allow breastfeeding at this time, don't fret. Your safety and your baby's safety are most important at this time....breastfeeding will still be available.

After your baby's initial state of alertness, she will enter a sleep state which generally lasts 2 to 5 hours. Your baby will enter a state of sleep and relative calmness. This is a difficult time to try breastfeeding. If your baby breastfed prior to this sleepy period, she has started the milk-producing functioning of your breasts and she is digesting colostrum, minimizing her chances of becoming dehydrated during this sleepy phase after delivery. This may be a good time for mom and baby alike to rest. Or, mom may like to hold her baby skin-to-skin on her chest to keep baby warm and to stimulate her milk-production.

When your baby awakens from his deep sleep there is another alert period. This period lasts about 2 to 5 hours. Interact with your newborn by offering the breast. Your baby will be rooming-in with you and you will hear his "stirrings".

When your baby is in a **deep sleep state** it will be very difficult to feed him. Your baby will appear very relaxed and when you apply a cold washcloth to his face, he'll still tend to drift off to sleep. But, this cycle only lasts 10 to 20 minutes, so relax and attempt to arouse your baby when you notice him entering the state of light **sleep**.

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Light sleep is seen when your baby's eyes are closed, yet fluttering under her eyelids. (This is called REM's or rapid eye movements.) You may notice some irregular breaths taken by your baby and also some slight muscle twitching. You should offer the breast at this time. This period can be short-lived and your baby may indeed fall back into a deep sleep. Your prompt attention to her needs will alert you to take this opportunity as a time to successfully latch baby onto the breast. Place you baby skin-to-skin for feedings to facilitate the rooting reflex.

Your baby enters a period of **drowsiness** when he opens & closes his eyes, moves his arms & legs, and breathes irregularly. This is a great time to pick-up your baby and feed, rather than leaving him in the crib.

Watch for your baby passing her hands close to her mouth, trying to chew on blankets or anything in reach, or suckling movements. This is a baby eager for the breast.

Crying is a late hunger cue. By the time your baby is crying, she is probably ravenous and won't be able to concentrate on learning to breastfeed. It takes 20 minutes form the first hunger cue until crying.

Feeding your baby according to his feeding cues will grant him the opportunity to learn to breastfeed and will keep him adequately hydrated Those drops really count! You can expect to feed your infant 10-12 times in 24 hours in the first days of life. And, remember, sore nipples is not a sign of proper latch-on.