



Feeding on Cue

Feeding on cue means feeding your baby whenever he or she shows signs of hunger, even if it is every hour or so.

Identifying feeding cues

Feeding cues are signs that your baby wants to eat. You will quickly learn how your baby communicates feelings of hunger. Watch for the cues, and be ready to breast-feed. Babies latch and feed better when they show early cues of hunger, such as:

- Moving mouth or tongue
- Moving hand to mouth

The next stage is called active cues. These include:

- Rooting (turning the head toward a cheek that is being touched and opening the mouth)
- Positioning himself for feeding, pulling on your clothes
- Sucking hand or tongue
- Bobbing on your chest, shoulder or arm and looking for a breast
- Fussiness or rapid breathing

Crying is a late cue. If your baby is crying, try to soothe him or her before latching. Crying makes it hard for babies to latch correctly.

Why is it important to feed on cue?

- Newborn babies have small tummies. They need small, frequent meals.
- Frequently feeding your baby will help you develop a good milk supply.
- Babies who feed on cue have less jaundice and gain weight faster.
- Frequent feedings can reduce breast engorgement and discomfort.

What about pacifiers or bottles?

We recommend that you not offer your baby a pacifier or bottle. Breastfeeding provides the stimulation your breasts need to produce milk. You will have a better milk supply if you do not give your baby pacifiers and bottles. If your breasts feel too sore to breast-feed, ask your nurse or a lactation consultant for help.

Pacifiers mask a baby's feeding cues, and they may reduce the number of feedings your baby receives. Sucking on bottles or pacifiers may even change how the baby latches onto your breast. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends delaying pacifier use until breastfeeding is well established or until the baby is about 4 weeks of age.

Pacifiers may be used briefly to soothe babies during painful procedures in the hospital or clinic. Other soothing techniques work as well as pacifiers. Ask your nurse to show you some alternate ways to soothe your baby if needed.