

10 Signs of a Well-Nourished Breastfed Infant

by Marianne Neifert, MD, FAAP

One of the most frequently asked questions is, "How do I know if my baby is getting enough milk?" Here are some important signs to look for:

1. Your milk should "come in" at 2-4 days after delivery.
2. Your baby should "latch on" correctly to your breast and suck rhythmically for at least 10 minutes per breast. You will hear your baby swallow often. Your baby gets more milk nursing from both breasts than from one side only. Alternate the side on which you start feedings to allow for both breasts to receive comparable stimulation and emptying.
3. Your newborn baby should nurse at least 8 times each 24 hours (This can be accomplished by nursing every 1 1/2 - 3 hours, with a single 5-hour stretch at night.)
4. Your baby should appear satisfied after nursing and will probably fall asleep at the second breast.
5. Your breasts should feel full before feedings and softer after your baby has nursed.
6. Baby should urinate 6 or more times a day. Urine is colorless, not yellow. If you notice a pinkish or orange-colored stain on the diaper after the 3rd day, your baby may not be getting enough milk.
7. Baby should have 4 or more bowel movements each day or it may mean that baby is not getting enough milk.
8. Baby's bowel movements should look yellow by the 4th or 5th day of life. (If bowel movement is dark or greenish brown by 5 days of age, baby may not be getting enough milk.)
9. Your nipples might be mildly tender for the first several days of nursing. Severe, persistent sore nipples in the second week of nursing may mean baby is nursing incorrectly or may not be getting enough milk. Check with your doctor or a breastfeeding specialist to check infant's weight and your nursing technique.
10. After 2-3 weeks of regular nursing, a milk letdown reflex or tingling sensation will occur. Failure to perceive any signs of milk letdown could suggest a low milk supply.

Notes and Recommendations:

- Your breastfed baby should gain about one ounce each day for the first several months of life.
- The only way to be certain your baby is getting enough milk is to have the baby weighed regularly.
- Breastfeeding difficulties are easier to remedy if recognized and treated early.
- Your pediatrician can work with a breastfeeding specialist to develop a feeding plan tailored for you.