

# FEEDING YOUR BABY: RESPONSIVE, INTERACTIVE, ENGAGED

6 MONTHS  
TO  
12 MONTHS

**Babies tell us what they need using their faces, bodies, and voices**

- I'm hungry!
- I need quiet time!
- I feel full!
- I'm ready to play!

## Quiet Time!

- Turns head away
- Stops eye contact
- Squirms away
- Fussing or cries

## Play Time!

- Eyes follow you
- Smiles eagerly
- Makes sounds
- Reaches out to you

**During feeding, babies show they are eager for more by:**

- Smiling or making “cooing” sounds
- Making eye contact with you or the caregiver
- Opening mouth and moving forward in the direction of food

**Be Responsive, Interactive, Engaged when breastfeeding, or bottle feeding or feeding solid foods**

- Respond to your baby's hunger cues quickly.
- **Look** at your baby. Smile and use eye-to-eye contact.
- Imitate facial expressions.
- Talk and play with your baby during feedings
- Respond to your baby's sounds and “words.”

Use your **words** to describe your baby's feelings of hunger and fullness, such as:

*I see you pointing at the food. You would like more.*

*Turning your head away tells me you're full.*

*Snuggling into my shirt tells me you're hungry!*

*You're pushing the bottle away. You want to stop.*

## Time to Eat!

- Moves arms and legs in excitement
- Sucks lips, hands, clothing, other things
- Moves head toward mother or toward food
- Pulls on mother's shirt
- Opens mouth when food is seen
- Reaches out for food with hands
- Points at food or asks for food with words or other sounds

Crying is a late sign of hunger.

## Time to Stop!

- Turns head to refuse food
- Pushes food away
- Clamps lips tightly together
- Releases the breast or the bottle, and does not search for it again
- Refuses nipple or bottle, if offered again

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## Introducing solid foods.

- Give solid foods **in addition to** breast or bottled milk.
  - Introduce foods slowly, starting with one time per day.
  - Gradually add more times as baby gets older.
  - Encourage your baby to eat – **do not force your baby to eat.**
- Small amounts of food at first are good.
  - Little by little increase the amount of food offered each day.
- **Babies know how much they want, watch for their cues.**
- Slowly add a variety of foods of different textures and thicknesses.

### Your baby's new skills!

- Holds head up unassisted.
- Sits up without help.
- Takes food from a spoon and swallows it.

## Respect and respond to your baby's cues with paced bottle feeding!

### Use these tips when feeding milk from a bottle:

- Hold the baby in an upright position, not lying down, so milk doesn't pool in baby's mouth.
- Let the baby draw the nipple into the mouth.
  - Stroke baby's lips gently with the bottle nipple to open baby's mouth.
- Feed the baby until the baby shows signs of fullness.
  - Take your time to avoid feeding too much in a short time.
  - Allow frequent pauses to discourage guzzling.
  - Give the baby a chance to feel full before becoming over-full.
  - Avoid coaxing the baby to finish the last bit of milk in the bottle after the baby shows signs of being done.
- Alternate the side you feed the baby during feedings.

### Why worry about milk pooling in the mouth?

- Greater chance of tooth decay.
- Increased risk of ear infections.