

Infant Feeding

A Guide for Parents and Caregivers

As a new parent or caregiver, you probably receive a lot of advice about how to feed your baby. This booklet will give you some basic information about feeding that can help your baby get the best start in life.

MYTHS and FACTS

MYTH: In hot weather, babies need water in a bottle.

FACT: Formula or mother's milk provides all the liquid a baby needs.

MYTH: Cereal in a bottle will help my baby sleep longer.

FACT: Cereal in a bottle will not help your baby sleep, and it may upset his tummy. Do not feed cereal until your baby can eat it from a spoon.

MYTH: If I am too busy to feed my baby, I can just prop the bottle.

FACT: Propping a bottle is not safe. A baby can choke. Take a break from what you are doing and enjoy this special time with your baby.



Photo courtesy of Wake AHEC

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In Collaboration With:
NC Child Care Health and Safety Resource Center
NC Infant Toddler Enhancement Project
Shape NC: Healthy Starts for Young Children
NC Department of Health and Human Services
Wake County Human Services and
Wake County Smart Start

Should I Schedule My Baby's Feedings?



It is best to feed your baby when he is hungry. It may feel tempting to put your baby on a strict feeding schedule, so you will always know when he wants to eat. But do you always eat at exactly the same time every day?

It is best to feed your baby in response to her changing appetite. Your baby may be more or less hungry at different times or on different days—just like you! It is best to feed according to her changing appetite.

Doctors recommend that all babies be fed in response to their hunger cues, not on a strict schedule.

Advantages of cue-feeding include:

- Babies tend to grow better, especially after 3–4 months of age.
- Babies are calm for feedings, so they feed better.
- Breastfeeding moms have an easier time making enough milk for their babies.
- Babies learn to eat when they are hungry, which may help prevent obesity when they are older.

But How Do I Know When My Baby Wants To Eat?

Your baby may not be able to speak, but he still is able to tell you what he needs.

- **When a baby is hungry**, she will open her mouth, stick out her tongue, and move her head from side-to-side. While sleeping, she may start to wriggle. If her hand is near her mouth, she may try to suck on it. **Crying is a late sign of hunger.**
- **When a baby is full**, he will move away from the food. Never prop a bottle, because it forces a baby to eat more than he wants. It makes him overeat and can increase vomiting. Just like adults, babies know when they have had enough.
- **When a baby wants to have some quiet time**, she often will look away. She may have changes in her skin, her movements, or her breathing.
- **When a baby wants to cuddle**, he will look at you. As he gets older, he will smile.
- **When a baby is unhappy**, she will fuss and sometimes cry. All babies do this from time to time. You can never “spoil” your baby by comforting her. Responding to her cries will help her feel more secure and cry less often.

When you try to understand what your baby is “saying,” both of you will be happier and more confident!



But Why Should I Care About Breastfeeding?

Even if you are not a breastfeeding mother, consider learning more about breastfeeding.

- **I work in child care**, and it is part of my job to care for breastfeeding babies. I want to have the training and information to take the very best care of all of the babies in my care.
- **I am an employer**, and I want to know all I can about supporting my employees, including breastfeeding mothers.
- **There is a mother in my life who is breastfeeding**, my sister or daughter or friend. I want to do all I can to support her choices about feeding her baby.
- **I may have another baby someday.** Although feeding formula is the right choice for our family right now, I would like to learn more about how I can give my next baby the very best start in life, and how breastfeeding can be a part of that.



If you would like to learn more, ask your provider for our booklet “Breastfeeding: Making It Work.”

*Copies also can be downloaded at our website:
<http://breastfeeding.unc.edu/>*