



How Much Does My Baby Need to Eat?

You may see different recommendations based on whether you choose to breastfeed or formula feed your baby. The most important thing to remember, whether you breastfeed or formula feed, is that your baby's feeding needs are unique. Babies are humans, not clocks. No book or website can tell you exactly how much and how often your baby needs to be fed.

First few days: Your baby may want to eat as often as every 1-3 hours. Frequent feeding helps increase your milk supply and gives your baby breastfeeding practice. As your baby grows, his/her belly also grows, allowing him/her to drink more breast milk during each feeding. Babies might only take in a half ounce per feeding for the first day or two, but after that will usually drink 1-2 oz per feeding.

After the first few days: Your formula-fed newborn will take about 2-3 ounces of formula per feeding and will eat every 3-4 hours on average. Newborn babies should breastfeed and or bottle feed on demand; as time passes and you learn your child's needs, you can start begin routine-based feedings.

Two months old: Babies usually take 4-5 oz per feeding every 3-4 hours.

Four months old: Babies usually take 4-6 oz per feeding.

Six months old: He/she will consume about 6-8 oz at each feeding totaling 4-5 feedings per day. Baby should drink no more than 32 oz of formula in 24 hours. Some babies may just want to suck on a pacifier after feeding. A pacifier should never be used to replace a feeding.

As a rule of thumb, most babies will increase the amount of formula they drink by an average of 1 oz each month before leveling off at about 7- 8 oz. per feeding. Solid food should be started at about 6 months old. Intake may vary slightly from day-to-day to meet baby's specific needs. Instead of going by fixed amounts, listen to your baby's hunger and satiety queues.

Breastfed babies may take smaller, more frequent feedings than formula-fed infants. If you are breastfeeding, pay close attention to your baby's hunger queues and feed on demand as needed – usually about every 2 hours or 8-12 times in a 24-hour span. Breastfed infants do not eat on a schedule. It is okay if your baby eats every 2- 3 hours for several hours, then sleeps for 3- 4 hours. Feedings may take about 15- 20 minutes on each breast. Watch for weight gain and dirty diapers to help determine if baby is getting enough to eat.

HOW DO I KNOW IF MY BABY IS HUNGRY?

- Moving head from side-to-side
- Opening mouth
- Sticking out tongue
- Placing hands, fingers, and fists to mouth
- Puckering lips, as if to nurse
- Nuzzling against breasts
- Showing rooting reflex (when a baby moves its mouth in the direction of something that's stroking or touching its cheek)
- Crying

Identifying your baby's hunger queues is important. Crying is a late sign of hunger; at this point your baby may be upset and be difficult to calm down for a feeding.

HOW DO I KNOW IF MY BABY IS EATING ENOUGH?

You can tell if your baby is getting enough to eat by the number of wet diapers he/she has in a day and based on appropriate weight gain.

From birth- 3 months old, a baby will usually gain up to 1 oz. of weight each day. Although it is normal for your baby to lose a small amount of weight after birth; 7-10% of body weight lost is usually acceptable. Your baby's doctor will check his/her weight at the first post-birth visit.

Follow your doctor's recommendation regarding frequency of appointments so baby can be weighed and measured as needed. He/she should see the doctor for a checkup three- five days after birth and then again at 2- 3 weeks old.



Most babies will double their birth weight by 5 months of age and triple their birth weight by their first birthday. If your baby is having trouble gaining weight, don't wait too long between feedings, even if it means waking him/her up. Always discuss how often and how much to feed your baby based on his/her growth with your pediatrician.

TRACKING DIAPERS

Baby's Age	# of Wet Diapers	# of Bowel Movements	Texture & Color of Bowel Movement
Day 1 (first 24 hours after birth)	1-2	The first bowel movement usually occurs within 8 hours after birth	Thick, tarry, black
Day 2	2	3	Thick, tarry, black
Day 3	5-6 disposable, 6-8 cloth	3	Looser, green-yellow (color may vary)
Day 4	6	3	Soft, watery, yellow
Day 5	6	3	Loose, seedy, yellow
Day 6	6	3	Loose, seedy, yellow
Day 7	6	3	Loose, seedy, yellow

Source: American Academy of Pediatrics

If you are using disposable diapers, the absorbency may make it harder to tell if the diaper is wet. Use this chart as a guide, but talk to your child's doctor if you are concerned that baby is not getting enough milk.

For breastfed babies in particular, the recommendations are as follows:

- **Day 2-3:** A minimum of 2- 3 wet diapers and 2 stools indicate that your baby is nursing effectively and getting the milk he/she needs.
- **Day 4-5:** Five or more wet diapers, with the color becoming a pale yellow, and at least two stools are considered indicative of good intake.
- **Rest of First Month:** Baby should have at least two yellowish, loose stools the size of a quarter or larger and at least six or more wet diapers each day.
- **Six Weeks Old:** Many babies begin to poop less often, so this is no longer a good indicator of proper intake. If your baby is producing enough wet diapers, gaining weight as he/she should, and meeting developmental milestones, your doctor will likely confirm that he/she is doing fine.

The information contained here within is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition. Never disregard professional medical advice or delay in seeking it because of something you have read.

If you think you may have a medical emergency, call your doctor, go to the emergency department, or call 911 immediately. GemCare Wellness (GCW) does not recommend or endorse any specific tests, physicians, products, procedures, opinions, or other information that may be mentioned here within. Reliance on any information provided by GCW, GCW employees, contracted writers, or medical professionals presenting content for publication here within is solely at your own risk.

Resources:

1. <https://www.womenshealth.gov/breastfeeding/learning-breastfeed/making-breastmilk>
2. <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/formula-feeding/Pages/Amount-and-Schedule-of-Formula-Feedings.aspx>
3. <https://www.lli.org/breastfeeding-info/frequency-feeding-frequently-asked-questions-faqs/>
4. <https://www.cdc.gov/nutrition/infantandtoddlernutrition/breastfeeding/how-much-and-how-often.html>

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