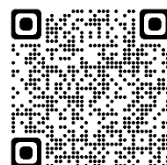


Whilst babies often show clear hunger signs such as sucking on their hand, it can be more difficult to know when your baby has finished a breastfeed and when to switch breasts.

As you get to know your baby it will become clearer to you when your baby has finished a breastfeed. Until this time, you may find the following points helpful:

- Breastfeed your baby skin to skin. This helps your baby stay awake when breastfeeding and feed more effectively.
- Once attached, your baby will initially suck rapidly to trigger the milk release. As the milk starts to release, your baby will often settle into longer rhythmical sucks. Babies often suck around 6-12 times then pause to breathe. This pause may last up to 30 seconds. You may also hear your baby swallow during this time. Swallowing may sound obvious or heard as a quiet 'ka' sound. The number of times your baby swallows will increase as milk supply increases.
- The above sucking pattern will continue without prompting if the baby is well attached. The time spent at the breast doesn't relate to the volume of milk the baby has taken. It is important to look for signs the baby is done and not interrupt the feed if baby continues to suck effectively.
- As baby becomes full, their suck/swallow cycle will become shorter, and the pauses longer. When you notice this, gentle breast compressions and tickling your infant may help prompt them back into effective sucking.
- To watch a short video on how to perform breast compressions please use the following QR code or link www.youtube.com/watch?v=tov102S_LZA
- Once your baby is no longer sucking effectively in response to gentle prompting, or once they are full, they may detach themselves. Other babies may continue to suckle for comfort. If you wish to detach your baby from the breast, you can do this by placing your finger in the corner of your baby's mouth to break the suction, and then ease them from the breast.
- To watch a short video on newborn sucking patterns please use the following QR code or link www.youtube.com/watch?v=yT5cGrkgZuY
- Your baby's body language also changes throughout a breastfeed. Initially, baby may be alert and tense with their limbs bent and fists clenched. Newborns often close their eyes quickly during a breastfeed but will continue to suck effectively. As your baby starts to feel full, their muscles will relax, their fists will unclench, and your baby will become relaxed and sleepy.



Once your baby is finished on the first side, you may wonder how to tell if your baby is still hungry and whether you should switch sides. The following tips may be helpful:

- Once your baby has finished with the first breast, you may like to change your baby's nappy and give them the opportunity to burp if they need. This may wake them up and give them the opportunity to tell you if they are still hungry.
- It is also normal for babies to have a short nap after they finish the first side. After this this they may start to show hunger signs again. If your baby is full, they are likely to remain relaxed and sleepy.
- Once your breasts have more milk, it can be helpful to gently feel your breast before a feed to get a sense of how full they are.

San Maternity

Has My Baby Had Enough?

Breastfeeding Information – Handout 4

Updated November 2023

- Once your baby is detached from the first side you can then feel that side for softening. If the breast still feels full and your baby is showing hunger signs, you may offer the same breast again so baby can get as much milk out as possible.
- If you are unsure, you could also reoffer the breast again as your baby will often complain if there is not enough flow available.
- If your baby is complaining or if the first breast feels nice and soft, you may move to the second side.
- It is important to note that breast milk is continually produced, and a breast is never truly empty. Indeed babies may go back for more milk from the first side after finishing from the second side. This is common during periods of cluster feeding in the evening. For more information on cluster feeding see our information sheet **Normal Newborn Behaviours** available on our website at www.sah.org.au/maternity-education.

Do I need to time and schedule feeds?

It is not necessary to time feeds at the breast. Some babies require only as short a time at the breast, whilst others may need to feed for longer. The volume a baby takes at one feed is not always related to the time spent at the breast.

How often and how long your baby feeds may depend on many factors such as the individual physical needs of your baby and the amount of milk available at each feed. Every mother/baby relationship is individual. Unrestricted feeding is an important factor in the establishment of successful breastfeeding. You can see our information sheet **Monitoring Baby's Progress** to learn how to know whether your baby is getting enough milk. It may also be helpful to read our patient information sheet **Normal Newborn Behaviours**, both of which are available on our website at www.sah.org.au/maternity-education.

Resources

Australian Breastfeeding Association
p: 1800 686 268
w: www.breastfeeding.asn.au

Sydney Adventist Hospital Lactation Department
p: 02 9480 4071
w: www.sah.org.au/maternity

Reviewed September 2023 by Leah Roberts, Lactation Consultant, RN/RM.

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