

Baby Sleeping and Eating: What is Normal?

Having a baby can be a wonderful time, but it can also be challenging. Many parents struggle with knowing how much their babies should sleep and eat. Don't despair! It will get easier.

Realistic Expectations for Your Baby's Sleep

It is normal for your baby to:

- Sleep a lot. On average, babies younger than one month sleep 16 to 18 hours per day, but they may only sleep 1 or 2 hours at a time. Every baby is different, and this can vary greatly.
- Be around 6 months of age before they develop a regular sleep cycle. Again, keep in mind that all babies are different and have varied sleep patterns.
- Wake up frequently to be fed or changed. Waking up often to eat can help increase your milk supply.
- Mix up their days and nights.
- Make noises, cry and whimper every so often while they sleep.
- **Not** "sleep through the night." When experts and parenting books talk about babies "sleeping through the night," they are usually talking about any 6-hour stretch. That means that if your baby falls asleep at 8 PM and wakes up at 2 AM, he has technically "slept through the night."

The Importance of Back Sleeping

Babies who sleep on their tummies may sleep too deeply. If your baby starts getting into trouble breathing, he is less likely to wake up on his own and move around if he's sleeping on his stomach. This is why it is safer to place your baby on his back for sleeping. Talk to other caregivers of your baby to make sure they understand that your baby should always sleep on his back.

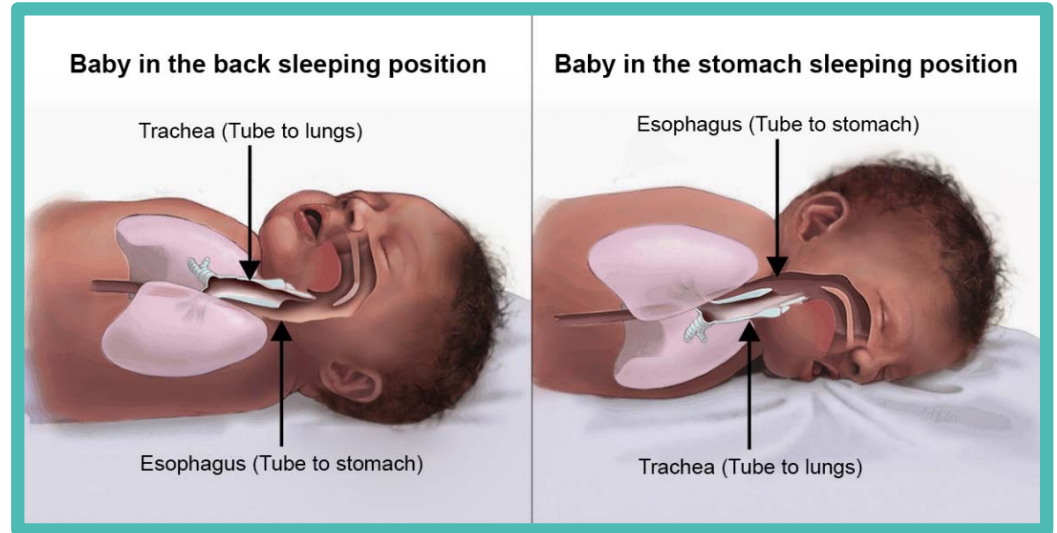


What if my baby keeps rolling on to her stomach?

Rolling over is an important and natural part of a baby's growth. Most babies start rolling over on their own around 4 to 6 months of age, but some start much earlier. Once a baby can roll from her back to her stomach and from her stomach to her back, she can remain in the sleep position she moves to on her own. To reduce the risk of sleep-related infant death, it is important that baby starts every sleep time on her back and that there are no soft objects, toys, crib bumpers, or loose bedding under baby, over baby, or anywhere in baby's sleep area.

You may worry that your baby will choke sleeping on his back.

Your baby is safer on his back. When he is on his back, the tube to his lungs is on top of the tube to his stomach. If he spits up while on his back, the food and fluid run back into his stomach and not to his lungs. When your baby is on his stomach, the tube to his stomach is on top of the tube to his lungs. Any food or fluid that is spit up can more easily pool at the opening of the tube to his lungs and may cause choking.



Tips for Helping Your Baby Sleep on His Back

Since your baby can startle more easily when on his back, it may take a little longer to teach him to fall and stay asleep in that position. By following a few simple steps, you can help your baby sleep well while keeping him as safe as possible.

- Keep naptime and bedtime the same every day. This way, your baby will get into the habit of going to sleep around the same time each day and evening.
- Watch your baby for signs of sleepiness, like yawning or rubbing his eyes, and then start putting him to bed as soon as he's sleepy. When babies are overtired, they often have a harder time falling asleep.
- Provide a consistent night-time routine, such as giving a bath, drawing the shades, giving your baby an infant massage, reading a story, or putting on a sleep sack.
- Plan to take a little extra time putting your baby to bed. This way you can help settle and soothe him if he startles or wakes up when placed on his back. For example, if your baby cries when laid down for sleep, instead of immediately removing him from the crib or bassinet, try patting him softly on the chest, stroking his cheek, gently talking or singing to him, or making a shushing sound to help soothe him to sleep.
- Offer your baby a pacifier (if breastfeeding is already well established).
- Use a white noise machine, a white noise phone app, or even a fan to create soothing background noise while your baby is falling asleep.
- Limit nighttime interactions to feeding, burping, changing and gentle soothing; use a soft voice and keep lights dim when caring for your baby at night. While your baby sleeps during the day, don't be afraid to make noise, such as listening to music or vacuuming. In addition, when your baby is awake during the day, talk, sing, and play with him. He is learning daytime vs. nighttime habits.
- When your baby cries at night, wait a few moments before picking him up. Your baby may settle back to sleep on his own or he may only need some gentle soothing such as patting him softly on the chest.
- Have others help you with your baby so you can get rest too.

Realistic Expectations for Your Baby's Feeding

It is normal for your baby to:

- Eat often. When your baby is first born, he may eat 8 to 16 times every 24 hours. Your new baby must eat at least 8 times every 24 hours to get enough calories for growth.
- As your baby grows older, he may not need to eat as often.
- Have irregular eating patterns. He may eat every 45 minutes and then sleep for 2-3 hours.
- Eat small amounts. When your baby is first born, he will have a small stomach and will need to eat more often than an older baby. At first, it is normal for your baby to eat as little as a few drops up to 2 tablespoons.
- Show hunger signs, including waking up, turning his head towards your breast, sucking on his fingers and fists and getting fussy.
- Let you know when he is full. He will slow his sucking, press his lips together, turn his head, push away, or fall asleep.
- Swallow some air while eating, so gently rub his back to see if he needs to burp.
- Spit up. Some spit up is normal. The safest way for your baby to sleep, even if he spits up, is on his back. He won't choke.

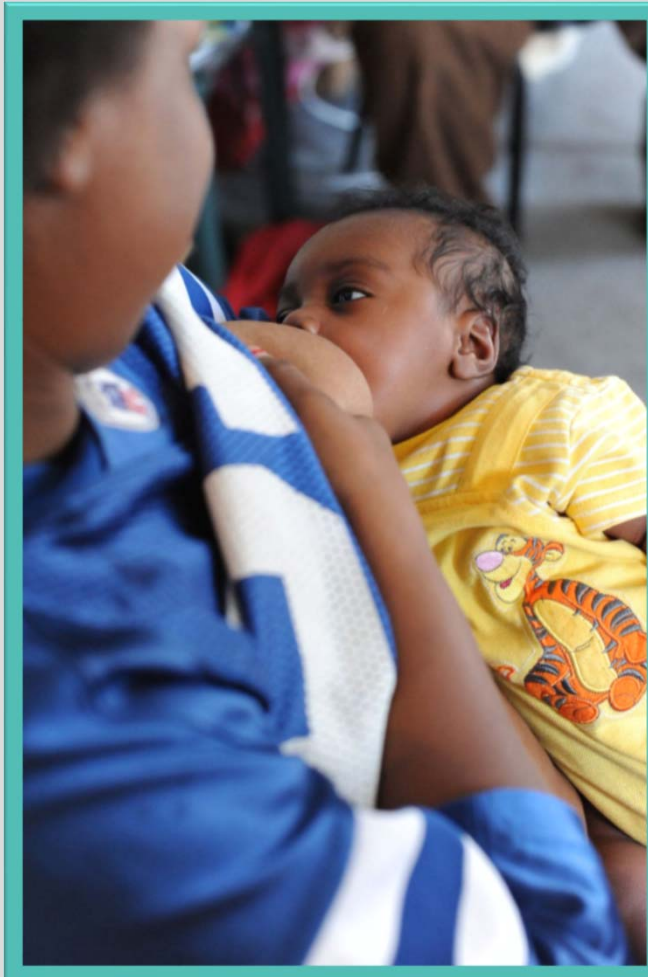


Photo credit: USBC Naomi and Ruth Project.

If you are breastfeeding, you may worry that you are not making enough milk for your baby.

You are making enough breast milk, even if:

- Your baby cries and wants to eat soon after the last feeding.
- Your baby wants to nuzzle at your breasts.
- Your baby is waking up during the night to eat.
- Your breasts seem small.
- Your breasts don't feel as full as they used to. After about 6 weeks, your milk supply will adjust to your baby's needs and your breasts won't feel as full.
- You make a small amount of breastmilk when pumping. Pumping your breastmilk may produce less milk than if your baby is suckling at your breast because your baby is better at getting out your milk than a pump is. And remember, newborns have very small stomachs. Just because bottles can hold 8 ounces, doesn't mean your baby should be eating that amount.

You will know when your breast milk comes in, because your breasts will feel full. This usually happens 2 to 3 days after your baby is born. Your milk may take longer to come in if you had an IV in during labor, had a C-section or if you have a medical problem like pre-eclampsia or diabetes. To help with this, hold your baby skin to skin so that he can nurse more often. Your baby's health care provider will want to watch your baby's weight more closely.

How do you know if your baby is getting enough to eat?

Your body knows how to make the right amount of breastmilk for your baby. The more your baby eats, the more milk your body will make. Whether you are breastfeeding or formula feeding, signs to see if your baby is getting enough to eat are:

- Your baby's urine is pale and diluted.
- By day 4, your baby should have 5 to 6 wet diapers every 24 hours and have 3 or more stools that are yellow (or at least turning yellow).

It's normal for your baby to lose a small amount of weight during the first few days after birth. Some pediatricians will want to check your baby's weight 1 to 2 days after discharge. If not, be sure to get your baby weighed at 1 week and then every couple of weeks to make sure your baby is gaining weight well. Average weight gain is 7 to 8 ounces a week for the first 4 months and about 3 to 4 ounces per week after 4 months.

Nothing. Your breastmilk, or infant formula, is the only food your baby needs for the first 6 months. Don't add cereal to your baby's bottle.

After 6 months, your doctor may recommend you start adding baby foods to his diet. It is not good to give your baby infant cereal before 6 months or to give formula after breastfeeding. This can lower your breast milk supply and can also cause your baby to gain too much weight.

What else should you be feeding your baby?



These guidelines apply to healthy, full-term infants. For specific questions about your baby, ask your pediatrician or health care provider.

Learn more at www.michigan.gov/safesleep or by reviewing [Your Guide to Breastfeeding](#).