

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.

Realistic Expectations for Baby's Sleep

It is normal for baby to:

- Sleep a lot. On average, babies younger than one month sleep 16 to 18 hours per day, but they may only sleep one or two hours at a time. Every baby is different, and this can vary greatly.
- Wake up often. Waking up often is a good thing and helps protect baby against sleep-related death.
- Develop a regular sleep cycle around six months of age.
- Mix up their days and nights.

Scan the QR code to watch “How Do Babies Sleep?” from Texas WIC to learn more about baby’s sleep patterns.



Did you know? When experts and parenting books talk about babies “sleeping through the night,” they are usually talking about any six-hour stretch. That means that if baby falls asleep at 8 p.m. and wakes up at 2 a.m., they have technically “slept through the night.”

The Importance of Back Sleeping

Babies should be placed on their backs every time they are laid down to sleep until one year of age. Babies sleeping on their tummies may sleep too deeply and may not wake up to take a breath. Stomach sleeping also increases the risk of rebreathing the same air that is near baby’s face. When this happens, a baby can end up with too much exhaled carbon dioxide and not enough oxygen in their blood.

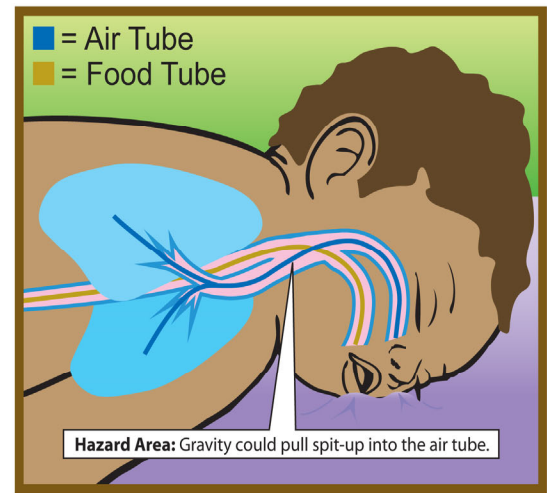
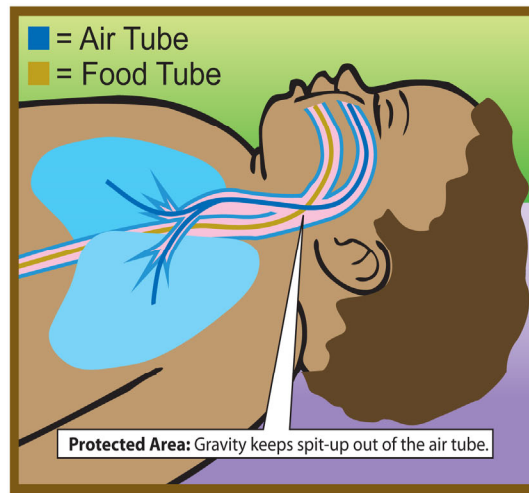
What if baby keeps rolling to their stomach?

Rolling over is an important part of a baby's growth. Most babies start rolling over around four to six months of age, but some start earlier. Once baby can roll from their back to their stomach and from their stomach to their back, they can be allowed to remain in the sleep position they move to on their own. To reduce the risk of sleep-related infant death, it is important that baby starts every sleep time on the back.



You may wonder if baby will choke when sleeping on the back.

Babies are safer on their backs. When a baby is on their back, the air tube is on top of the food tube. When baby spits up, liquid flows back into the stomach, not the lungs. When baby is on their stomach, liquid can pool at the opening of the air tube and may cause choking.



Tips for Helping Baby Sleep on the Back

Baby can startle more easily when sleeping on the back. Remember, this is a good thing! It protects baby against sleep-related death and makes sure they are getting enough to eat. The following tips will help you get baby to sleep while keeping them as safe as possible.

- Keep naptime and bedtime the same every day. Baby will get into the habit of going to sleep around the same time each day and evening.
- Provide a consistent night-time routine, such as closing the shades, reading, putting on a sleep sack.
- Watch for signs of sleepiness: yawning, rubbing their eyes, pulling at their ears. Put baby to bed when you see these signs. When babies are overtired, they often have a harder time falling asleep.
- Offer a pacifier (once breastfeeding is well established).
- Use a white noise machine, a white noise phone app, or even a fan to create soothing background noise.
- Limit nighttime interactions to feeding, burping, changing and gentle soothing; use a soft voice and keep lights dim when caring for baby at night. While baby sleeps during the day, make noise: listen to music, vacuum, talk in normal voices. When baby is awake during the day, talk, sing, and play with them.
- When baby cries at night, wait a few moments before picking them up. They may settle back to sleep on their own or they may only need some gentle soothing such as patting them softly on the chest.

Taking care of baby is hard. Scan the QR code to learn how to soothe baby and other tips for keeping calm.



Did you know? Planning a little extra time putting baby to bed will help you settle baby if they startle or wake up when they are laid down. For example, if baby cries when laid down for sleep, instead of immediately removing them from the crib, try patting them softly on the chest, gently talking or singing, or making a shushing sound to soothe them back to sleep.

Realistic Expectations for Baby's Feeding

It is normal for babies to:

- Eat often. When babies are first born, they may eat eight to 16 times every 24 hours. New babies must eat at least eight times every 24 hours to get enough calories for growth.
- Eat less often as they grow older.
- Have irregular eating patterns. They may eat every 45 minutes and then sleep for two to three hours.
- Eat small amounts. When first born, babies have a small stomach and will need to eat more often than an older baby. At first, they may eat as little as a few drops up to two tablespoons.
- Swallow some air while eating, so gently rub their back to see if they need to burp.
- Spit up. Some spit up is normal. Even if baby spits up, they are still safest sleeping on the back.



Photo credit: United States Breastfeeding Council



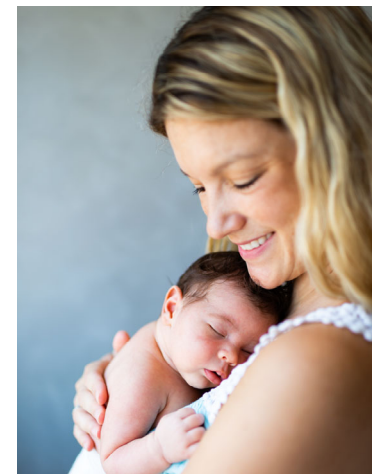
Do you know that babies will show you signs when they are hungry and when they are full?

- **Hunger signs:** Waking up, turning head towards the breast, sucking on hands or fingers, opening and closing their mouth, and/or getting fussy.
- **Signs of fullness:** Slowing or stopping their sucking, pressing their lips together, turning or pushing away, and falling asleep.

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

Your body may be producing enough human milk, even if:

- Baby cries and wants to eat soon after the last feeding.
- Baby wants to nuzzle at your chest.
- 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 six weeks, your milk supply will adjust to baby's needs and they may not feel as full.
- Pumping produces a small amount of milk. Depending on the pump and settings used, pumping may produce less milk than if baby is suckling.



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

[A lactation consultant and/or breastfeeding support group can help with any questions or concerns you have about breastfeeding](https://Michigan.gov/Breastfeeding) (URL: Michigan.gov/Breastfeeding).

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

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

- Baby's urine is pale and diluted.
- By day four, baby should have five to six wet diapers every 24 hours and have three or more stools that are yellow (or at least turning yellow).

It's normal for a baby to lose a small amount of weight during the first few days after birth. They should be back to birth weight by 10 to 14 days of age. Average weight gain is 7 to 8 ounces per week for the first four months and about 3 to 4 ounces per week after four months.

What else should you feed baby?

Nothing. Human milk or infant formula is the only food baby needs for the first six months. It is recommended that you start adding foods to baby's diet after six months of age. You can continue to breastfeed or offer pumped milk for as long as you choose.

Don't add cereal to baby's bottle or give formula after breastfeeding. This can lower breast milk supply and can also cause baby to gain too much weight.

Tummy Size

At birth, a baby's tummy is about the size of a toy marble.

By the tenth day of life, a baby's tummy is about the size of a ping pong ball.



How to Keep Baby Safe During Eating and Sleeping



Follow the safe sleep steps to keep baby safe during sleep. Planning ahead for when you are tired is another important way to keep baby safe. If there is a chance you could fall asleep with baby:

1. Choose a prepared bed instead of a couch, chair or rocker.
2. Prepare your bed by removing soft blankets and pillows.
3. Set an alarm.
4. Ask a partner to keep you company or check on you.

Scan the QR code to learn more about safe sleep steps and how to plan ahead when you are tired.



This information applies to healthy, full-term infants. For questions about your baby, ask your doctor, health care provider or home visitor. Learn more about safe sleep and breastfeeding, including how to find breastfeeding support, on the [Infant Safe Sleep Website](https://Michigan.gov/SafeSleep) (URL: Michigan.gov/SafeSleep).

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) does not discriminate against any individual or group on the basis of race, national origin, color, sex, disability, religion, age height, weight, familial status, partisan considerations, or genetic information. Sex-based discrimination includes, but is not limited to, discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, sex characteristics, and pregnancy.