

What Every Parent Needs to Know About Baby Getting Enough Milk Do Not Copy or Distribute

New babies make a lot of odd sounds. They make a lot of funny faces. And they can't use words to let you know what they need! That's why it's important for you to know how to read your baby's "language" of looks, sounds, and movements.

You'll want to respond to your baby's hunger signs before you have a crying baby on your hands. You'll also want to be able to tell that your baby is getting enough to eat. Here's what you can look for:

Signs of Hunger



Rooting

When a young baby feels something next to his cheek, he'll open his mouth and look for something to put in it. This reflex is strong and obvious when the baby is hungry. (It disappears around 3 months of age.)



Suckling motions

A hungry baby will often move her mouth even when there is nothing available to suck on. Her jaw will go up and down while her tongue moves back and forth.



Motor activity

A baby often shows his hunger with his whole body! He'll put his hands to—or in—his mouth. He'll flex his arms and move his legs repeatedly, as if riding a bicycle.



Posture/affect: tense; clenched fists

As she gets hungrier, the baby will feel pretty tense. Her posture will show it, but a particularly clear sign will be her tightly clenched fists.



Crying

The last sign of hunger is crying. If the baby waits too long to eat, he'll become frantic and cry. He'll need to be consoled, and he may need to be burped because he'll swallow air as he cries.

Signs of Satiety



Audible swallowing

The baby may or may not swallow his first time at the breast. In the first few days, listen for a periodic soft, breath-like sound during swallowing. When the mother's milk supply is abundant, you'll easily hear the baby swallow if he is getting milk. (If not, he's not getting it.)



2.

Shifting gears

First, expect several short, firm sucks. After the milk let-down, he'll shift to long, rhythmic sucks and brief swallowing pauses. As he gets full, he'll down-shift to several quick, light sucks in a row, a long pause, then more sucking. Shifting gears is a good sign he's getting enough milk.



3.

Disappearance of hunger cues

When she's had enough milk, all of the baby's hunger signs—from rooting to tensing to crying—will disappear!



4.

Posture/affect: drowsy

When the baby's tummy is full and he's satisfied, his body will be relaxed and he will appear drowsy. His fist may end up in his mouth, but it will be there loosely. He'll probably look like he's in a state of bliss!



5.

Sleeping, milk left in mouth

Young babies often fall asleep while feeding. A sleeping baby is a very, very contented baby. You may even see a drop of milk at the edge of her mouth.