

Printable Breastfeeding Chart

Day # __am/pm - __am/pm	Times at the Breast	Nutritive Feeds (#)	Wet Diapers (#)	Soiled Diapers (# & color)	Behavior	Appearance	Weight Change
1							
Expected	3+	2+	1	1			loss
2							
Expected	8+	8+	2	2			loss
3							
Expected	8+	8+	3	3			loss (<10%)
4							
Expected	8+	8+	3	3 - 4			maintain
5							
Expected	8+	8+	5	3 - 4			increase
6							
Expected	8+	8+	5 - 6	3 - 4			+ .5 - 1 oz/day
7							
Expected	8+	8+	5 - 6	3 - 4			+ .5 - 1 oz/day
8							
Expected	8+	8+	5 - 6	3 - 4			+ .5 - 1 oz/day
9							
Expected	8+	8+	5 - 6	3 - 4			+ .5 - 1 oz/day
10							
Expected	8+	8+	5 - 6	3 - 4			+ .5 - 1 oz/day

Instructions

For breastfed babies the trick to assuring that they are getting all the milk they need is simply to keep your baby close and feed them whenever they want to eat -- no tracking of when or how long they eat is necessary. Rarely, a baby will struggle to draw enough milk from the breast to meet their needs. In the first few days of life, this can result in an overly fussy baby who feeds frequently, or in a very sleepy, seemingly contented baby. Tracking the information in this chart can offer reassurance that all is well or alert you that additional breastfeeding help is merited.

Set Up: In the header make note of the time of day your baby was born. "Days" in the breastfeeding chart refer to the first 24 hours after birth, then hours 25-48, and so on. You may also want to mark a quick note on each day (1-10) detailing what days of the week it correlates with (MTW, etc). Amazingly, it is easy to lose track of the days! This will help.

Each Time Baby is Latched to Breast: Add a tally under "times at the breast". A tally represents a time when your baby woke up on their own and showed interest (feeding cues or fussing). If you woke your baby up in order to try to feed them, circle the tally. When comparing your data to the expected, it is the number of spontaneous events rather than those where you woke baby up that assure us that your baby is alert and likely getting all the calories they need. Every time your baby is breastfeeding, watch for signs of efficient and nutritive feeding - long slow rhythmic sucks with the chin dropping all the way open. If your baby does two or more bursts of 3-8 sucks in a row followed by a pause, and then resumes, mark a tally under "nutritive feeds." Most babies will feed nutritively 8-12 times a day even though they latch to the breast far more frequently.

Each Time You Change a Diaper: Add a tally under wet or soiled (or both!) diapers. If the diapers match or exceed expected it's likely that your baby is feeding nutritively even if their feeding behavior is confusing.

Daily: Jot down any questions or concerns you have about your baby's behavior (sleeping, fussing, amount of time they are alert) or appearance (color, skin quality, smells). If your baby was weighed, you may note weight on the chart as well. Daily weights are not necessary. We expect babies to lose no more than 10% of their birth weight, with the lowest weight usually recorded on day three, and returning to birth weight by 2 weeks.

Interpretation: Take note of how your baby's data compares with the expected measures. If things look similar, be reassured that your baby is breastfeeding nutritively! If your baby's data is significantly different, particularly in more than one category, reach out to a lactation consultant for help assessing how much milk your baby is getting with each feed and to learn how to help them get all of the calories they need.

Tips

- The Breastfeeding Chart reflects expected measures for a full-term (38 weeks plus) healthy baby without medical complications.
- Most babies do not breastfeed every 2-3 hours. Instead, they "cluster feed" - meaning that they may feed frequently for a few hours and then take a long gap. An efficient nutritive feed may last anywhere from 5-25 minutes. (Feeding much longer is usually done for comfort or because baby is not efficiently transferring milk from the breast. A lactation consultant can help you tell which and help the baby to nurse more efficiently.) Enjoy your baby! And trust that they will eat when they are hungry and at the pace best for them.
- Behavior: Newborns sleep an average of 17 hours a day and pretty much feed whenever they aren't sleeping :-). It is common for them to fall asleep at the breast, sometimes several times during a single feed. At a minimum, they will have a brief, 1-3 minute alert period every time they are awake. During these, they gaze at your face and turn to the sound of your voice. In contrast, an overly sleepy baby typically will not wake on their own 8-12 times a day, and when they do wake, they barely look around and will fall asleep almost immediately at the breast.
- Appearance: Skin tone is blotchy and changes frequently. White babies are often quite pink or red. Abnormal skin color is yellow - seen in the whites of the eyes as well. Muscle tone and skin quality are soft and flexible, but strong. If the baby feels very, very mushy with hangy skin, it can be a concerning sign.