



## CHOOSING TO BREAST-FEED YOUR BABY

Because of the nutritional composition, human milk is the ideal food for human infants.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that infants be breastfed exclusively for the first 6 months of life and that breastfeeding continue for at least 12 months.

Currently about 60% of infants are breastfed at birth but fewer than 25% are still breastfeeding at 6 months of age.

Babies who are breastfed have a decreased risk of developing ear infections, diarrhea, vomiting, pneumonia, wheezing, bronchiolitis, meningitis, and allergies.

When your newborn experiences hunger he or she will usually cry until their needs are met. Some cues to recognize your baby's need to eat before crying are:

- Hand-to-mouth or hand-to-hand movements
- Sucking Motions
- Rooting
- Mouthing

Babies should be fed whenever they exhibit these signs.

Newborns need between 8-12 feedings in a 24-hour period. Your baby may need to be awakened every 3 hours during the day and at least every 4 hours during the night. Once your baby is feeding well and gaining weight appropriately, he or she can determine the time and frequency of feedings needed.

The duration of each breastfeeding is highly variable. The average time for feeding is 30 minutes or about 15 minutes per breast. Some methods of determining your baby is finished are:

- Your baby's suck/swallow pattern has slowed
- Your breast is softened
- Your baby appears content and falls asleep or releases the nipple

## ENSURING GOOD NUTRITION

Because there is no bottle or formula to measure the amount of nutrients your baby is receiving, judging adequate intake is difficult. During the first month, your baby should have about 6-8 wet diapers and at least 2 bowel movements.

You can also listen for your baby's swallow, usually after a few sucks. Sleeping for a couple of hours right after a feeding is also a good indicator of fullness. On the other hand if a baby is not eating enough over several days he or she may become sleepy and easy to care for.

Another indicator of nutrition is weight gain. During the first week you baby can lose up to 7-10% of their birth weight but after that he or she should gain steadily. By around the second week your newborn should be back to birth weight.

If your infant continues to lose weight after 5 days, does not regain birth weight by 2 weeks, or has a weight below the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile by 1 month should be evaluated and closely monitored by your pediatrician.