

How do I know that I'm making enough breastmilk for my baby?

Here are some questions to ask yourself:

When I breastfeed my baby, are the feeds absolutely comfortable and pain free?

Does my baby come off my breast himself when finished at the end of each feed and does my breast feel softer?

Do I offer my baby my first breast then a few minutes after he's finished, rouse him to offer him the other as well?

How many breastfeeds has my baby had in the last 24 hours?

What is in my baby's nappies?

Is my baby growing well?

Is my baby happy and alert when awake, settled when asleep?

So you're asking yourself: how am I feeling and how is my baby doing?

Let's assume that your baby is between 48 hours old and a few weeks old:

You want your breastfeeding to be pain free and enjoyable. When you are having comfortable breastfeeds, then probably your baby is latched on as deeply as he can be. He'll then take lots of breastmilk. You then make breastmilk ready for the next feed.

On average, babies will be breastfeeding at least 8-12 times every 24 hours, many take far more breastfeeds.

Your baby will be growing (although the scales are not always needed - you can see his fingers and face getting chubbier, he might be getting longer).

What is in the nappy? This depends upon the age of your baby. Here is a rule of thumb:

Your baby's first 24 hours - typically one wee and some meconium poo (looks like Marmite)

24 - 48 hours old - typically 2 wees and meconium

48-72 hours - typically 3 wees and meconium starting to change to brownish-greenish seaweedy pesto colour, "changing stool"

Day 4 - typically 4 wees over this 24 hours and pesto poo

Day 5 - typically 5 wees over this 24 hours and pesto poo changing to yellow English mustard poo

This is a basic information sheet although GBSN hopes that it answers some of your questions. If you have further questions you may like to phone a Breastfeeding Counsellor. A list of their phone numbers may be found in the pink leaflet that you brought home from hospital "where to find support when breastfeeding". National Breastfeeding Helpline numbers are on the website. For convenience your baby may be referred to as "he". Written by Elizabeth Mayo, 2009.

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Day 6 - 6 weeks - typically 6 wees every 24 hours and at least one yellow English mustard poo

I'm worried that I might not be making enough breastmilk for my baby:

There are some signs that are NOT reliable as they are normal (eg maybe your breastmilk looks thin or watery, you are not expressing as much as you expected to or your baby is unsettled). We would suggest that you visit one of the GBSN groups to talk with the other breastfeeding mothers who are there and you can also have a look through the books and resource files of handouts.

It might be that your baby's weight gain is worrying you. You might like to look up the www.lalecheleague.org for some information on average weight gain or look in the LLL Breastfeeding Answer Book which is kept as a reference book at each GBSN group.

How do I boost my breastmilk supply?

Here are some ideas given by mothers based on the principle that the more you breastfeed your baby, the more breastmilk you produce:

- Always make sure that he has the deepest latching on possible so that he takes as much breastmilk as possible with each feed
- Feed your baby whenever he shows signs of hunger cues (sniffing, mouthing, smacking his lips) even though he looks to be still asleep
- Increase the number of feeds that you give him - has he started sleeping longer periods? If so, how would you feel about waking him to fit another feed in? Could you do a "babymoon" with him (see below)?
- Always offer him your second breast at each feed - he might not want it but you've given him the opportunity to have some more
- Switch nursing can be very good for increasing the amount of breastmilk that you make (see below)
- You can express your breastmilk whenever you have time so that you have extra milk to offer your baby in a cup

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What is a "babymoon"?

This is a period of time that you spend devoting yourself to your baby so that you can respond immediately whenever he makes any feeding cues. During this time, is there anyone who can look after you? Whilst what you eat and drink and how much you rest has no effect upon your breastmilk supply, someone looking after you can help you to cope more easily. If you could put 48 hours aside for a babymoon that would be great. However mothers have told us that shorter times have also been very effective. The main thing is that you take to your bed with your baby with lots of skin to skin contact and breastfeed more often.

What is switch nursing?

Switch nursing is an easy way of super-stimulating your breasts to make more breastmilk. Instead of "finish the first breast first, then offer the second" you:

1. Latch your baby onto your breast
2. When he stops suckling (it doesn't matter how long this takes), you take him off and move him to your other breast
3. When he stops suckling (it doesn't matter how long this takes), you take him off and move him back to your first breast
4. When he stops suckling (it doesn't matter how long this takes), you take him off and move him back to your second breast
5. And so on until your baby has had enough. You don't need a clock, you just go with how he is suckling.

Some mothers have told us that this is so effective, they felt a difference in their breasts within a couple of days. At this point, you can then revert back to the original "finish the first breast first, then offer the second". Since you have to be awake to watch your baby's suckling pattern, some mothers do switch nursing in the daytime and their original pattern at night so that they can doze.

I am still worried. Do I need to give my baby formula milk?

GBSN cannot answer that question for you. We suggest that you talk with your midwife or Health Visitor. We also encourage you to come to the GBSN groups to meet other mothers who might well have been in a similar situation.