



Breastfeeding for Healthier Babies
 By Janet D. Lawson, M.D., F.A.C.O.G.

I had my baby a week ago and breastfed in the hospital. Everything was fine until I got home. My mother gives my baby formula so she won't cry. I am afraid I don't have enough milk for my baby. - - Moneisha B., Houston

Congratulations on your new daughter and your decision to breastfeed. Your colostrum, the first food your daughter received in the hospital, was rich in antibodies to help her fight off illnesses. Now that she is one week old, your mature milk, thinner and perhaps slightly blue in color, is the only food or drink she needs for the first six months.

It's doubtful you're starving your baby because breastfeeding experts estimate that less than 1% of all women are physiologically unable to breastfeed.

Until your milk supply is well-established, you may fear you cannot breastfeed, but be patient. It takes time to build up your milk supply. In fact, your baby is the one who determines how much milk you produce. The more she nurses, the more milk you make. The less she nurses, the less milk you make.

To ensure you are producing enough milk, nurse at your baby's first signs of hunger. These signs might include:

- turning her head to the side in search of your breast,
- sucking on her hand, or
- making smacking noises

Do not wait until she begins to cry before you feed her. Crying is the last hunger cue a baby gives, and a crying baby has a difficult attaching to the breast properly.

Giving your baby supplements of formula or water during these early weeks actually interferes with your milk supply. Remember, your newborn's tummy is about the size of her fist, so she will eat small amounts, every 1½ - 2 hours throughout the day and night. As she grows on your milk, she will nurse less often.

Every new mother should keep all of her baby's doctor's appointments to monitor her baby's progress, but there is a simple way to tell if your baby is getting enough to eat. Just count your baby's wet and dirty diapers and compare them to the chart below:

How to tell if your baby is getting enough to eat		
1 st days/weeks	Wet Diapers	Dirty Diapers
Day 1	1-2	1
Day 2	2-3	2
Day 3	3-4	At least 3
Day 4	4-5	At least 3
Day 5	4-5	At least 3
Days 6 - 45	At least 6	At least 3
The number of dirty diapers will be less after about 6 weeks. Your baby should be gaining weight.		

If your baby doesn't have this number of wet/dirty diapers, you should contact her doctor or a lactation consultant. If you need more help than this column provided, call the toll free assistance line at 1-800-514-6667. Let me hear of your progress.

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