

FEEDING AND GROWTH

How often should I feed my baby?

Feeding patterns differ between babies and vary from day to day. Before discharge from hospital, we hope that you will be aware of your baby's feeding pattern. Premature babies generally feed every 2 1/2-4 hours. Look for cues that your baby is hungry. Premature babies do not always cry, but may move around and become restless if it has been 2-3 hours since they last fed. You may need to wake your baby if it has been longer than 4 hours since their last feed. Discuss this with your nurse.

How much should I feed my baby?

A baby who weighs about 200 grams usually needs 320-360 mls of milk per day. A good way to see if your baby is getting enough milk is to check if she is having 6-8 pale, wet nappies every day.

Most formula fed babies will be taking 55-85 mls every 3-4 hours when discharged from the hospital. If your baby is finishing the feed in a shorter time and is still acting hungry, offer an extra 10-20 mls. A breastfed baby usually increases the amount of milk they get by sucking longer or wanting to feed more often. This builds up the mother's milk supply. Your baby may want to feed every 2 hours until your supply meets his/her demands.

An appropriate weight gain is 140-150 grams/week.

Will my baby be able to breast feed even though he/she has been taking a bottle in the hospital?

The NICU and Special Care Nursery staff encourage mother's to express whilst their baby is in hospital and to commence breast feeding when your baby is ready. The nursing staff will work with you and your baby once he/she is able to coordinate sucking and swallowing with their breathing. Babies may sometimes receive some bottles to help with strengthening their suck and aid in training in swallowing coordination. Babies who have received bottles during this early time while learning to breast feed are frequently able to successfully go home breast feeding.

Premature babies may take days or weeks to learn how to breast feed. It is important to remember to be patient and try not to become discouraged if progress is slow. If for some reason you decide not to breast feed or for a number of reasons you have not been able to successfully express and breast feed, it is important to not feel guilty or disappointed. The most important thing is that your baby receives nutrition and grows and that you are both happy and healthy.

What should you know if your baby receives formula?

Most formulas have 70 calories per 100 mls (similar to breast milk). The medical staff will order this strength unless they specifically require higher calories for growth. It is very important to use only what the medical staff have ordered. Higher calorie formulas (80-100 calories/100 mls) need to be prepared following a recipe that will be provided by the Canberra Hospital Nutrition Department. If your baby requires extra calories we will show you how this is done.