



# Infant Feeding: A Guide for Parents and Caregivers

As a new parent or caregiver, you probably hear a lot of advice about how to feed your baby. This booklet will give you some basic information about feeding that can help your baby get the best start in life.

## Myths and Facts About Infant Feeding

- **MYTH:** In hot weather, babies need water in a bottle.
- **FACT:** Formula or mother's milk provides all the liquid a baby needs.
  
- **MYTH:** Cereal in a bottle will help my baby sleep longer.
- **FACT:** Cereal in a bottle is bad for your baby's sleep, and may upset her tummy. Don't feed cereal until she can eat it from a spoon.
  
- **MYTH:** When a baby starts to get hungry, she'll cry.
- **FACT:** When a baby first gets hungry, she'll give signs like wriggling, opening her mouth, or sticking out her tongue. Feeding before she cries will prevent crying. Crying is a late sign of hunger.
  
- **MYTH:** If I am too busy to feed my baby, I can just prop his bottle.
- **FACT:** Propping a bottle is not safe. A baby can choke. Take a break from what you're doing and enjoy this special time with your baby.



Breastfeeding-Friendly  
CHILD CARE

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# Should I schedule my baby's feedings?



**It is best to feed your baby when she is hungry.** It may feel tempting to put your baby on a strict feeding schedule, so you will always know when she wants to eat. But do you always eat at exactly the same time every day?

**It's best to feed your baby in response to her changing appetites.** Babies may be more or less hungry at different times or on different days—just like you! It's best to feed according to their changing appetites.

**Doctors recommend that all babies be fed in response to their hunger cues,** not on a strict schedule.

## ***Advantages of cue-feeding include:***

- Babies tend to grow better, especially after 3-4 months of age.
- Babies are calm for feedings, so they feed better.
- Breastfeeding moms have an easier time making enough milk for their babies.
- Babies learn to eat when they're hungry, which may help prevent obesity when they are older.

# But how do I know when my baby wants to eat?

Your baby may not be able to speak, but he is still able to tell you what he needs.

- **When a baby is hungry,** she will open her mouth, stick out her tongue, and move her head from side-to-side. While sleeping, she may start to wriggle. If her hand is near her mouth, she may try to suck on it.
- **When a baby is full,** he will move away from the food. Never prop a bottle, because it forces a baby to eat more than he wants. It makes him overeat, and can increase vomiting. Just like adults, babies know when they have had enough.
- **When a baby wants to have some quiet time,** she will often look away. She may have changes in her skin, her movements, or her breathing.
- **When a baby wants to cuddle,** he will look at you. As he gets older, he will smile.
- **When a baby is unhappy,** she will fuss and sometimes cry. All babies do this from time to time. You can never “spoil” a baby by comforting her. Responding to her cries will help her feel more secure and cry less often.



***When you try to understand what your baby is “saying,” both of you will be happier and more confident.***

# Even if you are not a breastfeeding mother, consider learning more about breastfeeding.

*But why should I care about breastfeeding?*

- *I work in child care,* and it is part of my job to care for breastfeeding babies. I want to have the training and information to take the very best care of all the babies in my care.
- *I am an employer,* and I want to know all I can about supporting my employees, including breastfeeding mothers.
- *There is a mother in my life who is breastfeeding,* my sister or daughter or friend. I want to do all I can to support her choices about feeding her baby.
- *I may have another baby someday.* Although feeding formula is the right choice for our family right now, I'd like to learn more about how I can give my next baby the very best start in life, and how breastfeeding can be a part of that.



*If you'd like to learn more, ask your provider for our booklet "Breastfeeding: Making it Work." Copies can also be downloaded at our website,*

**<http://sph.unc.edu/breastfeeding>**

*Provided by:*



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