

# ask an expert

Curated by UCSF Outpatient Lactation consultants

## How can I tell if my baby is getting enough milk from breastfeeding?

**Listen:** Baby will make a 'ca' sound when swallowing. The more swallows you hear, the better.

**Look:** Wide, slow jaw movements signal good drinking. It is also normal for babies to pause between sucking bursts.

**Feel:** Breasts are softer after feeding, and baby's arms and hands are relaxed.

**Count:** 6+ wet diapers after 6 days of age with soft, yellow stools.

**Weigh:** Babies gain 1 oz./30 g per day from 0-3 months.

## My baby fed almost constantly for a few hours last night. Is this normal?

Yes. This is called cluster feeding and is a very common behavior. It's not a cause for concern as long as your baby is making lots of diapers and gaining weight well.

## Cluster feeding can be intense and exhausting. A few things may make it easier:

- Learn the side-lying position so that you can rest while feeding.
- Keep snacks nearby that you can easily eat one-handed.
- Enjoy your favorite books, shows, and podcasts.
- Contact your baby's health care provider or a lactation consultant if you suspect that your baby is not getting enough milk at the breast.

## My partner wants to bottle-feed the baby at night so that I can get more sleep.

### How do we do this?

**Introduce a bottle after your baby is three weeks old** and breastfeeding is well-established. Some families may need to give bottles sooner if there are feeding issues, so follow the recommendations of your baby's health care provider or a lactation consultant.

### Do paced bottle-feeding with a slow-flow nipple to prevent a bottle preference.

You can find videos online demonstrating paced bottle-feeding. It should take at least 5 minutes to feed 1 oz. (30 mL), so a 3 oz. bottle would take 15 minutes or more, for example.

**Pump each time your baby gets a bottle to protect your milk supply.** Your body is primed to feed your baby frequently, so it may not be possible in the early weeks for you to go more than 4-5 hours without removing milk from your breasts. Some parents find that they can extend their window of sleep by 1-2 hours while their partner bottle-feeds the baby before they have to pump. That longer block of sleep often makes a big difference! As your baby starts to sleep longer stretches, you and your partner can enjoy more sleep, too.

## Nighttime bottles don't work for all families, and there are other ways to maximize your sleep:

- Take a nap at the same time as your baby
- Sleep in while a support person cares for your baby
- Go to bed early

"I just want to say thank you for your support in the early weeks/months. Had I not met you on Day 7 I would've given up on trying to breastfeed and never have seen how amazing and easy it can be. Thanks for helping this new mom make her and baby's life easier."

*UCSF Patient testimony*