

Milk Supply and Weight Gain

While each baby is unique, there are some general guidelines regarding milk supply and weight gain for breastfed babies. The information below is meant to provide basic information for breastfeeding moms. We encourage you to seek help from a board-certified lactation consultant (IBCLC) if your baby's weight gain does not meet these guidelines.

Weight Gain in the Early Days

Most mothers need early and frequent milk removal to make milk. Skin-to-skin contact during the first hour after birth and offering your breast with feeding cues, at least every 2-3 hours, helps to establish a good milk supply.

If your baby is not latching after birth, you may use a quality breast pump every 2-3 hours to encourage your milk supply. Some mothers find it more helpful to hand express in the early days. For a video demonstrating hand expression, visit: <https://firstdroplets.com/>

Babies often lose up to 10% of their birth weight in the first 4 days. **By day 4, your baby should stop losing weight and start to gain weight.** Babies feed better when they are gaining weight.

What is normal behavior for a baby who is gaining weight in the first week?

- Waking and showing feeding cues every 2-4 hours, or at least 8-10 times a day.
- Feeding 10-30 minutes from one or both breasts per feed.
- Acting content after feeding.
- Having at least 3 yellow stools and 6 wets in 24 hours.
- Gaining 1+ ounce per day.

By day 10-14, your baby should regain their birth weight. If this has not happened, please seek assistance from an IBCLC.

Once your baby is back to birth weight and gaining well (usually 7-10 ounces per week), your baby may start sleeping longer at night and feeding a bit less frequently. However, it is also normal for a baby to wake at least every 3-4 hours at night until they start solids.

A general rule of thumb is that **removing milk more often** (< every 3 hours) **will increase your milk supply** and **removing milk less often** (> every 3-4 hours) **will decrease your milk supply.** This is due to hormones that help regulate milk supply and factors in the milk that communicate directly with milk-making cells.



Size of Feedings and Overall Milk Intake

A newborn's stomach is small. At 24 hours of age, a baby will consume about 5-10 cc of colostrum at each feeding. As your milk supply increases, feeding sizes gradually increase. On day 3, babies usually take ~30 cc from the breast, and by 1 month, they usually take between 3-5 ounces at a feeding.

In the early days, practice latching on both breasts at each feed. Once your baby is gaining well, with at least 6 wets and 3 stools, try to soften well/drain one breast before offering the second breast. Mothers who store more than 3 ounces of milk in each breast may find that their baby often prefers to feed from only one breast per feed. Other mothers find they may need to feed their baby from both breasts at every feed. **Follow your baby's lead.**

More important than the size of an individual feed is your baby's overall milk intake. It may vary from day to day, but most babies eat between 19 and 30 ounces per day by the time they are one month old, or when they weigh about 10 pounds. Most importantly, your baby should follow their own growth curve on the WHO growth chart. It is okay for your baby to be at the 5th percentile or the 90th percentile if your baby is consistently gaining and staying on "their" curve.

http://www.cdc.gov/growthcharts/data/who/grchrt_girls_24lw_9210.pdf

http://www.cdc.gov/growthcharts/data/who/grchrt_boys_24lw_9210.pdf

Remember, any amount of your milk that your baby gets is beneficial. The benefits are dose related. Exclusive breast milk and breastfeeding for 6 months is optimal for your baby. But any breast milk and any breastfeeding is beneficial for your baby.

As babies gets older, they generally become more efficient at the breast. A baby older than 2 months of age may finish a feed in 3-5 minutes. Your baby may also feed less often, every 3-5 hours rather than every 2-3 hours. Your breasts may not feel as full and you may be less aware of your milk let-down. This can all be normal. At 3 months of age, normal weight gain slows down a bit to ~4-7 ounces a week. At 6 months of age, normal weight gain is ~2.5-4 ounces a week. IF you have concerns about whether your baby is gaining well, **chart your baby's weight on the WHO growth chart** (see links above).

All mothers make and store different amount of milk in their breasts. If you are a mother who stores small amounts of milk in each breast, you can still breastfeed your baby. However, you may need to remove milk more frequently than most mothers, even as your baby get older.

Frequent milk removal is still the key to supply. If you are back at work and pumping, or your baby is sleeping longer at night, you may see a slight decrease in your supply. Your baby may let you know by fidgeting at the breast, wanting to feed more often, or refusing to breastfeed at all and may prefer a bottle. You may need to remove milk more often or wake your baby to feed in the middle of the night.

All hormonal methods of birth control have the potential to decrease your milk supply. (See our information on ***Hormonal Methods of Birth Control***.) You may want to consider a barrier method of birth control, or at least avoid hormonal methods of birth control that are injected or implanted.

If you feel that your milk supply is not adequate for your baby, please see our information on ***Supporting Your Milk Supply*** and/or schedule an appointment with an IBCLC.

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