

He Can't Still be Hungry! He Just Ate! By Ms Diane Wiessinger, MS, IBCLC

How many times did you eat or drink something today? Coffee break? Water fountain? Gum? Snack? TV nibbles? Most adults have an urge to eat about every 90 minutes while they're awake!

Why do you eat or drink? Hunger? Thirst? Comfort? For social reasons? Just because?

Are you trying to gain weight? If you had to double your weight in 6 months, how would you do it? Would you drink water? Chew sugarless gum between meals? Eat large meals at long intervals? Or would you do lots and lots of snacking, day and night?

When it comes to food, babies are people, too. They're people plus, because they are trying to double their weight in about half a year, with a stomach that starts out no bigger than a golf ball. Of course they eat and eat and eat, especially in the early weeks. If your newborn is gaining about half a pound a week, he's doing well. If not, a breastfeeding specialist can help you find ways to help him nurse more effectively. Remember, if milk doesn't go in often, pounds can't go on fast. Here are some basics:

Pacifiers are sugarless gum for babies - an imitation of what a baby really needs. You already have two of the real thing!

Think nursing first whenever your baby seems unsettled - even if he just ate. He can always say no. If someone always analyzed our reasons before allowing us food, we'd go crazy! We don't want to have to demand our food, and neither do our babies. What would you think of a hostess who withheld the cheese dip, saying, "You can't be hungry; you just ate"? Why withhold food from a fast-growing baby? Nursing freely and frequently is actually easier than taking time out for big meals at long intervals. Your breasts won't feel uncomfortably full, and his stomach will probably be happier, too.

Let your baby finish the first breast first rather than shifting him automatically after a set time. Each breast provides a changing "soup to dessert" menu. Would you like to have more soup put in front of you just when you were settling in with dessert? If Side 1 wasn't enough, he can go on to Side 2, and maybe even back again. If Side 1 was all he wanted, fine.

Let your baby, not the clock, tell you when he's full. Imagine a dinner at which the maître d' bustles over and tells you your time is up!

Nighttime is especially valuable nursing time. Don't be too eager for your baby to sleep through the night. Keep him conveniently close at night - in your bed if you like - and know that you're helping him grow those brains and bones.

If your baby seems to nurse constantly and isn't gaining well, get help from someone who understands breastfeeding. A few simple changes are usually all it takes to get back on track. And when all is well again, you can forget about "feeding", and just enjoy nursing. Let your baby lead the way, and the pounds will take care of themselves.

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