

## **Provider Information**

### **BF - Breastfeeding**

#### **BF-GD GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT**

**OUTCOME:** The parent/family will understand the progression of growth and development of a breastfeeding baby.

#### **STANDARDS:**

Explain growth and development of a breastfeeding baby, such as:

- a. bonding behaviors
- b. frequent feeding during growth spurts
- c. eye contact with mom while breastfeeding
- d. baby showing interest in surrounding while breastfeeding
- e. baby gaining independence by crawling and walking
- f. reduced interest in breastfeeding as development progresses

#### **The Importance and Duration of Breastfeeding:**

Exclusive breastfeeding is sufficient to support optimal growth and development for the first 6 months of life. Breastfeeding should begin within 1 hour of birth and is made possible by skin to skin contact between mother and baby immediately after the baby is born. Breastfeeding mothers should be encouraged to breastfeed exclusively for the first six months of their baby's life and to start feeding their baby solid foods at 6 months while continuing to breastfeed. Breastfeeding should be continued for at least the first year of life and beyond as mutually desired by mother and baby.

#### **Growth Spurts**

Growth spurts are essential parts of physical maturation and they are developmental milestones. Growth spurts, also called "frequency days," are inevitable in every baby. Often breastfeeding mothers become concerned during these times about having enough breast milk to meet the demands of their growing baby. It can be very confusing when a baby has been feeding and sleeping well, then suddenly patterns reverse and the baby begins feeding more frequently and becomes fussy.

#### **What to Expect**

During a growth spurt, a baby will suddenly begin to feed more frequently. The baby will feed for longer periods of time than usual and may become very fussy. Sleep patterns may also become very erratic (sleeping more than usual or not sleeping at all). Generally, the major growth spurts occur at 2, 3, and 6 weeks of age, then at 3 and 6 months of age. Of course, there will be other times where you might notice other growth spurts (frequency days).

When babies feed more frequently, many mothers question whether baby is truly hungry or simply suckling because they find the nipple soothing. If the mother feels that

her baby has had a good feed (you hear the baby gulping or your baby seems generally relaxed or your breast (s) is not as full as when you started breastfeeding), put your baby back to the breast, preferably the same one you just used. The baby may have dozed and not finished feeding. Sometimes it only takes another 5 minutes of a feeding for a baby to be fully satisfied.

**Common Issues for Mom**

A common issue with breastfeeding mothers is a low milk supply. Quite often, moms feel anxious when their babies are fussy and feeding more frequently and relate this to a low milk supply. But you can distinguish a true growth spurt from an issue with your milk supply. The best way to do this is by keeping track of the time this goes on. Growth spurts are temporary; often ending as quickly as they started. A low milk supply will last for a longer time or until you take action to improve it. If you need help, ask your healthcare provider.

Go with your baby's cues and breastfeed frequently. If your breasts begin to feel softer and not as full as they typically do, this is normal. Soft breasts do not mean that you have a low milk supply. When your baby feeds more frequently, this stimulates your body to make more milk. If you have concerns about your milk supply, ask your healthcare provider.

**Common Issues for Baby**

Fussiness is the most noticeable issue. A mom's gut response is to feed because this has the most soothing effect. If the baby is fed frequently during growth spurts, the fussiness may subside. In addition, if sleep patterns are disrupted, the baby may become fatigued. This makes it harder to relax or settle the baby. It may seem like an endless cycle at a certain point, but stay calm and focus on addressing the baby's needs.

<b>Breastfeeding Stages</b>	
<b>Day 3</b>	<p>Your baby is feeding frequently and for long periods of time. Aside from physical exhaustion kicking in, sore nipples continue to be the most common issue in the first three days postpartum. At this stage, even with a properly latched baby, nipple sensitivity is still prevalent because of postpartum hormonal changes. However, if nipples are cracked, bleeding, or blistering, the latch-on needs help. Contact a healthcare provider immediately.</p> <p>Some moms also find that their milk has started to transition from colostrum to transitional milk by Day 3. They often feel a heaviness to their breasts, which indicates that their milk is starting to "come in." Feeding frequently will relieve and prevent severe engorgement. So try your best to be persistent and consistent to avoid the problem.</p> <p>Jaundice is common in breastfed babies. Breastfeeding frequently (at least 8 to 10 times a day) in the first 3 days of life may reduce the need for other interventions, such as phototherapy (going under bilirubin lights).</p>

	<b>Breastfeeding Stages</b>
<b>First 2 weeks</b>	<p>The baby should be waking every 2 to 3 hours to feed, with the feedings lasting anywhere from 15 minutes to almost an hour. Sleep patterns will vary, but many babies -- when fed frequently throughout the day -- may give their parents a good 4 to 5 hours of sleep at night. At this stage a baby will have gained their birth weight back or surpassed it.</p> <p>One of the most common complaints from new mothers at this stage is that their baby is feeding too frequently. If this is the case, ensure that you are finishing one breast before offering the other. This way, you can be sure that your baby is getting to the rich, fatty hind-milk, which should hold him/her for a longer time in between feedings. This will also make a difference if the baby has been having problems with weight gain. However, if your baby is feeding for over an hour and never seems satisfied, your milk supply should be assessed by your physician.</p> <p>At this stage, the baby should be waking on their own, every 2 to 3 hours, to feed. If his/her weight gain is adequate, urination and bowel movements are normal, and there is no evidence of jaundice, it is not necessary to wake the baby up. Babies begin to learn sleep/wake rhythms very early on.</p> <p>By this point, your milk should be in and well established. Your breasts are stimulated because the baby is feeding every 2 to 3 hours. There may actually be times where you feel you cannot hold out until the next feeding because you are so full. This is very normal and, over time, your breasts will get back to their pre-pregnancy shape and size.</p> <p>If baby is not having at least 6 wet diapers and 3 stools in 24 hours, make sure to wake baby to feed every 3 hours and call your baby's healthcare provider. Stools should be changing from black, tarry, and sticky to yellow, curdy and liquidy.</p>
<b>3 weeks to 6 months</b>	<p>For most mothers and babies, breastfeeding settles into a comfortable pattern now. Do not be tempted to "schedule" the feedings – baby will do this for you.</p> <p>Continue to "drain" at least one breast very well at each feeding. If baby will not do this, use a pump to help "drain" each breast at least once a day.</p> <p>Babies get very adept at latching. Some mothers may introduce a bottle with a slow flow nipple and occasionally use it when they must be away from baby. Mothers who are returning to work may gradually start to stockpile some milk.</p> <p>Some babies change their stooling pattern around 6 weeks of age; they may start to stool less frequently, however, the consistency of their stools should be the same.</p>

	<b>Breastfeeding Stages</b>
<b>At 6 months</b>	<p>Around 6 months of age, most babies will show an interest in solid foods. The intake of solids should not decrease breast milk intake.</p> <p>Introduce one food at a time. Begin with plain (not mixed, sweetened, or spiced) strained or pureed baby cereals, then non- allergenic vegetables such as carrots or green beans, and then fruits. Start with 1-2 teaspoons and progress as appetite indicates.</p> <p>Breastfeeding infants may require vitamin D, fluoride, and iron supplements. Ask your healthcare provider for recommendations.</p> <p>Many babies nurse very quickly at this age (3-5 minutes at the breast) and may become very distracted at the breast. You may find it easier to nurse in settings that are more private.</p>
<b>At 1 Year</b>	<p>Many mothers continue to breastfeed beyond 12 months, even though they may have planned to stop by one year.</p> <p>Mothers may continue to breastfeed beyond 12 months, for as long as mother and baby want to continue.</p> <p>Most babies nurse infrequently at this age - only once or twice a day. Others may wish to nurse more often as they begin to explore and their world expands.</p> <p>Ideally, a baby will wean gradually as they are ready to let go of breastfeeding. If a mother initiates weaning, it is recommended that it be done gradually in order to avoid mastitis or engorgement.</p>

Click here for a Patient Education Handout for the mother on [Growth and Development during Breastfeeding](#).

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