



Weight loss and your newborn

Patient information

It is normal for your breastfed newborn to lose up to 10 percent of their birth weight within the first 72 to 96 hours after birth. If breastfeeding well, babies will usually start to gain weight after the first few days, and most babies are back to their birth weight by two weeks of age.

Reasons for loss of birth weight

Difficulty attaching to your breast

Breastfeeding takes time and practice to learn. Your baby may be preterm, vulnerable, sleepy following a long labour, be jaundiced and find it difficult to attach to your breast and transfer enough breastmilk to meet their needs.

Your breast and nipple shape, or variations to your baby's oral anatomy, can make it more difficult for your baby to latch well at the breast.

A midwife or lactation consultant can assist you to position and attach your baby to the breast and help you to recognise when they are feeding effectively.

Number of breastfeeds in 24 hours

Frequent breastfeeds stimulate your breasts to build a milk supply, as well as providing your baby with all the fluid and nutrition they need.

Responding to your babies feeding cues and breastfeeding 8 to 12 times in 24 hours is important. You may need to wake your baby to feed.

Health issues can affect breastmilk supply

A delay in stimulating your breasts due to a complicated birth or separation from your baby can affect your breastmilk supply.

Conditions such as postpartum haemorrhage and retained placenta, or hormonal conditions such as polycystic ovarian syndrome, diabetes or thyroid disorders can also affect your supply.

A breastfeeding plan to support your baby's weight gain and advice on how to increase your breastmilk supply can be provided by your midwife or lactation consultant.

What can I do?

Your baby will require a medical review from a GP or paediatrician.

Offering skin to skin contact helps stimulate breastfeeding hormones and encourages your baby's natural feeding behaviours.

Sometimes babies look eager to breastfeed but tire quickly.

If your baby is not breastfeeding effectively, you will need to express both breasts using a hospital grade electric pump after the breastfeed. This will provide your breasts with stimulation to build and support your supply and additional breastmilk to feed to your baby.

Speak to your midwife about an appropriate electric breast pump, correct flange size and ways to feed your baby the expressed breastmilk.



Your baby may need more milk than you are producing. The need for additional volume (eg: formula) continues until your breastmilk supply has increased and meets your baby's needs.

It is important to support your breastmilk supply by continuing to offer the breast first and expressing post breastfeed until the breast is soft, comfortable and lump free.

Follow-up appointments with your midwife or lactation consultant are important, as transitioning to exclusive breastfeeding may take several weeks.

How do I know my baby is receiving enough breastmilk?

Breastfed babies will have one to two wet nappies and have passed meconium in the first 24 hours.

The number of wet nappies and bowel actions will gradually increase, and bowel movements will change in colour from dark to yellow as your milk supply increases in volume.

Once your baby is breastfeeding effectively and receiving mature breast milk (days 5 to 6), you can expect your baby to:

- Have five or more wet nappies every 24 hours with clear or pale urine
- Have soft yellow bowel actions – at least 2 to 3 per day for the first 6 to 8 weeks
- Be settled after most feeds
- Be back to their birth weight by 2 weeks
- Gain an average of at least 150g to 200g per week in their first three months.

Support and follow-up

For individual breastfeeding support, contact the Breastfeeding Centre of WA on (08) 6458 1844 or visit the website.



Scan the QR code for more resources on breastfeeding, including the 'Helping your baby to breastfeed' online workshop.

For more information, contact the Australian Breastfeeding Association Breastfeeding Helpline on 1800 686 268 or visit the website www.breastfeeding.asn.au

The information provided is for information purposes only. If you are a patient using this publication, you should seek assistance from a healthcare professional when interpreting these materials and applying them to your individual circumstances.



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