

Stages of Infant Feeding Cues

Early Cues: "I'm hungry"



STIRRING



MOUTH OPEN



TURNING HEAD

Mid Cues: "I'm really hungry"



STRETCHING



PHYSICAL
MOVEMENT



HAND TO
MOUTH

Feed me: "I'm really upset"



CRYING



AGITATED



TURNING
RED



Infant Driven Feeding in the NICU

PARENTS' ROLE IN FEEDING

Infant driven feeding is an easy approach to begin feeding your baby based on cues (signs they are ready to feed). As your baby approaches 31 weeks, we look for signs of feeding readiness. Your baby will stop feeding when he/she shows signs of fatigue or stress. Each baby has his/her own timetable regarding when it is time to begin feeding. Since every baby's hospital course is different, we look at each baby individually.

Cue based feedings allow for a safe and enjoyable experience for you and your baby.

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Will be 31 weeks on:

What are your baby's cues?

- » Baby is awake
- » Rooting for a pacifier, turning head side to side
- » Latching on and sucking on pacifier or fingers

What are signs of disinterest, fatigue, or stress?

- » Baby is asleep and no longer actively participating in feeding or showing cues
- » Baby shows stress signs by turning head away, facial grimaces, and putting hands up in a "stop sign" motion
- » Changes in his/her vital signs

A sleepy or briefly alert baby most likely will not have enough energy to successfully feed

Some helpful hints you will be learning:

- » Recognizing your baby's readiness skills
- » Calming and swaddling
- » Offering a pacifier for short periods
- » Feeding in side-lying position
- » Gently offering nipple/offering taste of milk on tip of tongue
- » Limiting feeding to last only 20 minutes to avoid fatigue and stress

Breastfeeding

- » A baby who will be breastfed often begins to go to breast before bottle feeding.
- » When initiating breastfeeding, we would like to offer as many opportunities as possible when the infant is showing cues.
- » If you need assistance with breastfeeding, lactation consultants are available.
- » The nurses can help you establish a feeding plan.

Bottle feeding

- » When your baby has shown he/she is ready to begin bottle feeding, his/her team will assist you in learning tips and techniques to become safe and successful at bottle feeding.
- » We will be available to help and support you as you and your baby learn together.

Feeding requires patience

- » Since your baby tells us when he/she is ready to feed, it is possible that you may come during a scheduled feed when he/she may not show readiness signs (do not get discouraged).
- » This is the perfect time to do skin-to-skin, hold and talk to your baby, and offer him/her a pacifier (this allows him/her to practice and gives you bonding time).
- » Current research has shown that babies who are fed based on their own feeding cues go home faster.
- » We want this to be a positive experience for you and your baby.
- » You have a team available to help you (nurse, lactation consultant, as well as physical, occupational, & speech therapists skilled in feeding).