

After reading this lesson, click the survey link at the end to answer a few questions and receive nutrition education credit for your class.

Understanding Newborn Behavior



Babies, especially newborns and young infants, don't have words to say just yet, other than the adorable babbles and coos. Although they do not use words they do communicate their needs through certain behaviors. Let's take a look at some of the most common cues that babies communicate.



I'm hungry

Often times your newborn goes through stages of hunger. If we catch the early hunger cues and feed them right away this will typically make for a more enjoyable feeding time with baby. Here we will cover the stages to help you become more familiar and ready to spring into action when you notice the early cues!

Early Stage

- Rooting-Searching *It is a natural instinct for newborns to root for the breast.
- Stirring movements
- Smacking lips-opening and closing mouth
- Makes sucking noises
- Brings hands near mouth or in mouth
- Begins fidgeting/squirming
- Flexes arms and legs

Late Stage

- Making agitated body movements
- Crying
- Turning red in the face

*Most newborns will need to be calmed down before feeding. Skin to skin is a great way to bring baby back to calm and establish a good feeding.

I'm Full

Learning fullness cues is just as important as learning hunger cues. If infants are overfed it can lead to digestive distress and fussiness. Babies that are fed at the breast are in control of the feeding but when babies drink from a bottle it is important to watch their fullness cues and stop the feeding.



- Relaxes– Extends arms and legs, fist opens. *Think of their arm as a gas gage to their hunger and fullness.
- Slows or decreases sucking
- Turns away from the breast or bottle
- Falls asleep

I need something to be different

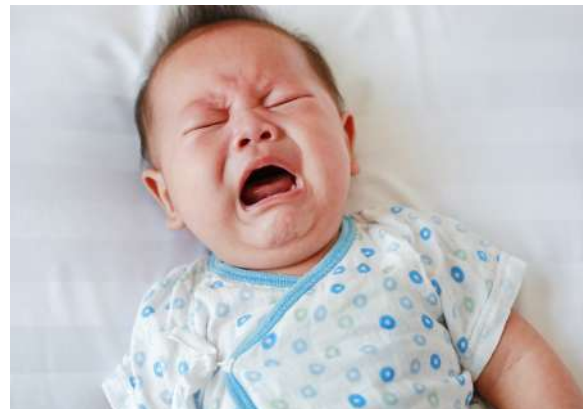
- Arches body back
- Turns away
- Frowns or grimaces
- Body becomes tense
- Closes eyes

It is our job to try and figure out what is bothering them. Often times they just need a break or have become over tired and need some rest to feel better!

I want to be near you

- Relaxed body and face
- Wide open eyes
- Staring at a parent or caregiver's face
- Kicking and moving arms in excitement
- Smiling

When you see these cues don't miss the opportunity to bond with your baby. Talk, smile, make funny faces, all of this your baby will enjoy and will often times try to mimic and talk back with you!



When babies cry

You've done your best to watch for your newborn's behaviors that signal a change BUT sometimes crying is unavoidable! All babies cry. It's another way they communicate. They want our urgent response.

- Hold baby near or try skin to skin to help calm her down.
- Take baby to a quiet room. Sometimes babies get overstimulated in noisy environments and it causes stress and crying.
- Sing or rock, repeating the same action for a few minutes before trying something new.
- Do a mental checklist of the cues baby was giving before the crying and try to respond once he has calmed down.

Crying is stressful for everyone involved. It is ok to sit baby down and take a short break. Tag someone else in to try their cry calming skills!

*If the crying becomes too much, talk with your infant's Healthcare Provider.

STOP!

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