

## **Baby-led or Demand Feeding**



How often do *you* eat or drink something? Probably more than 5-6 times a day. If it is acceptable for adults to eat when they want, why do we try to make babies eat by a timetable? Some babies want to nurse only 6- 8 times a day and some are 'snackers' and want to nurse 12-14 times a day.

Many parents try to get their baby into a feeding routine. However, babies thrive best when they are allowed to feed in response to their cues or signals. This is called baby-led or demand feeding or cue-feeding.

### **Early signals of wanting to feed that your baby shows:**

- ◇ Sucks on his hands, blanket or other things that touch his mouth
- ◇ Turns his head as if looking for the breast
- ◇ Opens his mouth and reaches out with his tongue.

If these signals are ignored, your baby may

- ◇ Start to make small noises and fuss a little, and then,
- ◇ Go to a full cry to indicate his needs.

Some babies are a little harder to understand. They may wake-up and cry immediately or they may lie calmly and if not fed, go back to sleep. Keeping your baby near you helps you to notice his signals.

**A crying baby is hard to feed for both mother and baby.**

**Learn the early signals of hunger that your baby shows and respond.**

You may be missing your baby's hunger signs if your young baby:

- ◇ Breastfeeds less than 7-9 times a day
- ◇ Often wakes up and goes back to sleep without feeding
- ◇ Sleeps for more than 4-5 hours at a time.

If these happen, you need to wake your baby every 2-3 hours and encourage him to feed.

### **Finished feeding signals are:**

- ◇ Body relaxed and arms are at rest
- ◇ Lets go of the breast, though some babies like to go on sucking gently until they fall asleep.

**A newborn baby's stomach is only the size of a golf ball.**

As well as food, breastfeeding gives your baby comfort and contact as well as immune factors to help prevent infections. If your milk supply is low, your baby will want to nurse more often so that your breasts make more milk. This is the way babies and mothers are designed. Ignoring nature can result in low weight gain and a baby who learns that his signals get no response.