

# #3: Feeding on Cue

## Prenatal Education



### What is “feeding on cue?”

- Feeding on cue simply means feeding your baby whenever he or she shows feeding cues.
- Feeding cues are signs of hunger.
- Feeding cues include mouthing movements, tongue protruding, rooting, hand to mouth movements and hand-sucking.
- Crying is a late hunger sign.
- Feed your baby whenever he or she wants for as long as he or she wants.



### What are the advantages of feeding on cue?

- Since sucking and emptying the breasts determines milk supply, feeding your baby as often and as long as he or she wants helps your body to make as much milk as your baby needs.
- Frequent feeding in the first couple of weeks builds up milk-making tissue in your breasts, assuring a good milk supply for months to come.
- Your baby latches and feeds better when you catch his or her early feeding cues such as tongue movements and rooting. If you wait until your baby is crying, it may take more time to calm them before feeding.
- You bring comfort and pain relief to your baby when you feed on cue. Nursing is for comfort as well as food. Your baby cannot be held “too much” or “spoiled.”
- Your baby is used to constant closeness and feeding. Frequent feeding gives them that connection.

- Your baby will gain weight more quickly.
- Your baby will have less jaundice.
- Mothers have less engorgement.
- Longer overall duration of breastfeeding.

### Good signs that your baby is full or satiated

- Relaxed arms, legs and face.
- Sleepy or alert, but calm.
- Does not root when you brush your finger across their lips or cheek.

### Avoiding pacifiers and bottles will help your baby breastfeed more efficiently

- The sucking action on a pacifier or bottle is very different than how your baby latches the breast.
- When your baby sucks a pacifier or a bottle, the breast may not get enough stimulation to make the milk your baby needs.

It is helpful to think about life from your baby's perspective. When you were pregnant, your baby was fed and carried all the time. He or she heard your voice and heartbeat. They felt your motion and your warmth. After being born, your baby isn't ready to go several hours without feeding, or be content alone. Nursing is comforting to your baby, and is more than just a way to obtain food. Your baby will feed frequently because they are growing a lot, food is rapidly digested and they need the comfort that comes from being close to you.

### **Feeding cues are the signs your baby gives you to let you know they are ready to nurse**

Feeding cues are mouthing movements, tongue protruding, rooting, hand to mouth movements and hand-sucking. These signs mean it is time to put your baby to breast. Crying is a late hunger sign. Try to feed your baby before he or she gets too fussy. Your baby will latch better if you calm them before attempting to latch at the breast.

### **Let your baby nurse whenever he or she wants**

- Milk production functions in a cycle that starts with your baby. Sucking and emptying

the breasts calls in the order for milk. Your body responds to your baby by producing enough milk to satisfy your baby's needs. Frequent feeding causes your body to produce more milk.

- During the first two weeks after delivery, your breasts are developing milk-making tissue. Frequent feedings make your body produce the hormones that increase this tissue. This will help to assure a good milk supply for many months to come.
- After the first two weeks, regulation of milk supply is solely supply and demand. Your body will make as much as your baby needs, so continue to feed according to baby's cues. Your baby will go through growth spurts when he or she feeds very frequently for a day or two, then your supply increases to meet the demand. These may occur at 2 weeks of age, 6 weeks of age, 3 months of age and 6 months of age. The more you nurse your baby, the more milk you make.

### **Let your baby nurse as long as he or she wants**

- At the beginning of the feeding, your baby gets the watery protein portion of the milk, called foremilk. Toward the end of the feeding, your baby gets the fatty part of the milk, called hindmilk. This fat helps your

baby to feel full, gain weight and sleep better.

- By letting your baby finish the feeding, you know that they got the fat-rich hindmilk. Your baby is finished when he or she pops off the breast or falls asleep. Burp your baby, then offer the second breast.
- Your baby may not nurse at the second breast for as long as the first. Start with this breast at the next feeding.

### **Avoiding pacifiers and bottles will help you have a better milk supply**

- Your body does not know when your baby sucks on a pacifier or bottle, and does not get the signal to continue to increase your milk supply.
- Pacifiers mask feeding cues. You can miss baby's feeding cues when they are sucking on a pacifier.
- Sucking a pacifier or bottle is different than sucking at the breast. At the breast, your baby's jaw is relaxed wide open, his or her lips are flanged out at the areola, and the tongue comes forward in order to obtain milk. This is the exact opposite action a baby would take to suck on a pacifier or bottle — your baby's jaw is tight, lips are pursed, and the tongue is bunched behind the nipple or pacifier. When your baby has sucked frequently on a bottle or pacifier, they may not latch well at the breast.

**Breastfeeding is the gift of a lifetime—  
A gift that only a mother can give.**