

# How to Help Your Infant Feed

Infants can't talk, so we have to look at them to understand how they are feeling.

An infant is ready to eat when

- awake at feeding time
- eyes are open
- body relaxed (flexed)
- breathing and heart rate are regular, and
- looking for food with his or her mouth (**rooting**)

An infant who is not ready to eat will also show you signs. When you see these signs, you need to help your infant get ready to eat before you start to feed him or her. Here are some signs you might see, and how to respond.

## **Signs Infant is Not Ready to Eat**

- Skin is pale or dusky gray
- Many hiccups
- Is working harder to breathe
- Goes without breathing for 20 seconds (**apnea**)
- Heart rate is under 80 beats per minute (**bradycardia**)
- Not enough oxygen in the blood (**oxygen saturations under 90**)

A baby with these signs needs rest. Wait until it is time for the next feeding.

An infant who is ready to eat is ready to breastfeed. Talk to your nurse to learn more about breastfeeding.

<b>Signs Infant Needs Help to Eat</b>  <b>How the body is moving</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infant's body is tense or tight</li> <li>• Infant's body is too loose or floppy</li> <li>• Infant arches back</li> </ul>	<b>How to Help Infant Eat</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wrap the infant so hands are near his or her face</li> <li>• Hold the infant in your arms close to your body</li> <li>• Check infant's heart rate and oxygen saturations.</li> </ul>
<b>How the mind is working</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awake, but little energy</li> <li>• Very sleepy or drowsy</li> <li>• Sleeping</li> <li>• Looks worried or panics, too alert</li> <li>• Too excited, frantic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make the room feel calm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— dim the lights</li> <li>— keep the room quiet</li> <li>— stop talking</li> <li>— stop rocking</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Wrap the infant so hands are near his or her face</li> <li>• Give infant a pacifier</li> <li>• Check infant's heart rate and oxygen saturations.</li> <li>• Change positions</li> <li>• Unwrap or rewrap the infant in the blanket</li> </ul>
<b>Suck and Swallow</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suck is weak, not working</li> <li>• Face is too relaxed to suck</li> </ul> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gulps</li> <li>• Drools, spits, spills food out of mouth</li> <li>• Has trouble with suck-swallow-breathe</li> <li>• Hiccups</li> <li>• Is working hard to breathe</li> </ul> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coughs</li> <li>• Chokes (which may mean food in airway)</li> </ul>	<b>To make suck stronger</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Squeeze infant's cheeks</li> <li>• Give infant a pacifier when he or she is not eating or eating by tube</li> </ul> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give infant a pacifier before feeding</li> <li>• Use a slow flow nipple</li> <li>• Put infant on his or her side</li> <li>• After a few sucks, tilt the bottle down</li> </ul> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gentle back rubbing or pat on back if needed</li> <li>• Hold the infant's head and neck so baby can breathe easily. Head should not fall forward or back.</li> <li>• Change positions - lay on side</li> <li>• Call the nurse</li> </ul>

Tuesday, March 11, 2008 • DRAFT to family review #914 • Written by Sarah Deitz



# The Emily Center

## How to Help Your Infant Feed

Procedure/Treatment/Home Care  
Si usted desea esta información en español,  
por favor pídasela a su enfermero o doctor.

Name of Health Care Provider: \_\_\_\_\_ Number: 914  
For office use: Date returned: \_\_\_\_\_  db  nb

## Family Review of Handout

Health care providers: Please teach families with this handout.  
Families: Please let us know what you think of this handout.

Would you say this handout is hard to read?  Yes  No  
easy to read?  Yes  No

Please circle the parts of the handout that were hard to understand.

Would you say this handout is interesting to read?  Yes  No

Why or why not?

Would you do anything differently after reading  
this handout?  Yes  No

If yes, what?

After reading this handout, do you have any  
questions about the subject?  Yes  No

If yes, what?

Is there anything you don't like about the drawings?

Yes

No

If yes, what?

What changes would you make in this handout to make it better or easier to understand?

Please return your review of this handout to your nurse or doctor or send it to the address below.

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**Thank you for helping us!**