

## **Bottle Feeding My Late Preterm Baby**

### **What is the problem?**

Late preterm babies may not eat as well as term babies. Because my baby was born before his term date, I will need to monitor his eating closely because he may **not**:

- Become wide awake and cry to let me know that he is hungry.
- Be fully awake for feedings.
- Stay awake long enough to finish a feeding.

### **What do I need to do?**

- I need to watch my baby closely for his hunger signals. Signs that he is getting hungry, even if he is still sleepy are:
  - Sucking on his tongue or lips.
  - Moving his hands toward his mouth.
  - Fussing or fidgeting.
  - Turning his head from side to side.
- I need to feed my baby as soon as I notice hunger signals, before he uses energy fussing or crying.
  - Late preterm babies eat every 3 to 4 hours during the day.
  - Feedings are timed from the start of one feeding to the start of the next feeding.
  - Late preterm babies need to eat at least 6 to 8 times a day.
  - Late preterm babies should not have more than one 4 to 4½ hour sleeping stretch at night during their first week at home. I may have to wake him up to eat.
  - Feedings should not last more than 30 minutes. Longer feedings may make my baby tired.

- I can use the chart below to find out how much formula my baby needs:

Baby's weight:	Amount of Formula During the First Few Days at Home		Amount of Formula by 7 to 10 Days of Age	
	Total per day	Each feeding	Total per day	Each feeding
4 pounds	6 ounces (180 mL)	25-30 mL	10 ounces (300 mL)	35-50 mL
5 pounds	8 ounces (240 mL)	30- 40 mL	12 ounces (360 mL)	45-60 mL
6 pounds	9 ounces (270 mL)	35-45 mL	15 ounces (450 mL)	55-75 mL

Note: 1 cc = 1 mL; 30 mL = 1 ounce; 45 mL = 1½ ounces; 60 mL = 2 ounces.

- I need to watch my baby's diapers to know he is getting enough to eat:
  - The number of wet diapers my baby has tells me if he is getting enough fluid. I should expect:
    - 1 wet diaper during the first 24 hours after delivery.
    - 2 wet diapers on the second day.
    - 3 wet diapers on the third day.
    - 6 to 8 wet diapers per day by the end of the first week.
  - Urine should be light yellow in color by the end of the first week.
  - Stools change during the first week after birth:
    - Meconium is the sticky, black stool that a baby passes during the first few days after birth.
    - Stool color changes to green or yellow by the end of the first week.
    - Breast milk stools are looser and look seedy by the end of the first week. Formula stools are soft and mushy, and may be yellow or brown.
    - The number of stools a late preterm baby has each day varies from baby to baby. My baby may have a stool after each

feeding. He may stool 3 to 4 times each day, or he may only stool once a day.

- The amount of stool in each diaper should gradually increase to at least the size of a quarter by the end of the first week.
  
- I need to keep my baby's doctors' appointments. My baby will be weighed at each appointment. Weight gain lets me, and my baby's doctor, know that my baby is getting enough to eat. My baby should:
  - Start to gain weight by the end of the first week at home.
  - Gain between 4 and 7 ounces each week.
  - Be back to his birth weight by 2 weeks of age.
  
- My baby may become dehydrated if he does not eat enough. He is more likely to become dehydrated if he is not eating at least 6-8 times a day, has a fever, is vomiting or has diarrhea. If I am not sure my baby is taking enough formula, I can watch for these signs of dehydration. I should report these signs to my baby's doctor immediately because dehydration can be serious.
  - Decreased number of wet diapers
  - Dry lips
  - Dry skin
  - Sunken eyes or dark circles around eyes
  - Soft spot on head may feel or look sunken
  - My baby is sleepier or more irritable
  - Weight loss

### **Why is this important?**

If I follow the guidelines given above, my baby is more likely to get enough to eat and gain the right amount of weight.