

# Cluster Feeding

Parents are often concerned when their baby is “constantly feeding.” They may question mom’s milk supply, baby’s ability to breastfeed, or think that their milk does not have enough calories. It is called cluster feeding when a baby seems to be constantly feeding. Cluster feeding is a normal baby behavior, whether the baby is breastfed or formula fed, but it is more common in breastfed infants. Typically, an infant will nurse every 2 to 3 hours. When cluster feeding, a baby will feed several times in that same time period, like every hour or more! Although it usually occurs in the late afternoon to evening, it can happen at any time. Here are some quick answers to commonly asked questions about cluster feeding.

## **Why do babies cluster feed?**

Babies usually cluster feed when they need additional calories due to a growth period or when they previously have not fed well. Babies who miss feedings will sometimes cluster feed given the opportunity. Cluster feedings help build the mother’s milk supply and increase the baby’s daily calorie intake. Growth periods occur around three, six, and eight weeks after birth.

## **Is cluster feeding a sign that there is something wrong with my baby or my breastmilk?**

No, it is normal for a baby to cluster feed. If your baby is cluster feeding, ensure there is a good latch and adequate milk transfers. Sometimes a baby will feed often or longer because of a poor latch.

## **How can I be sure that my baby is getting enough milk?**

Keep track of the number of wet diapers the baby has in 24 hours. If the [diaper count](#) is low for the age of the baby, contact your WIC office, lactation consultant, or health care provider. Check out “[Is my baby getting enough?](#)” for more information.

## **My baby is cluster feeding but it is not the time for a growth spurt. Is this normal?**

Yes. Some babies will cluster feed to soothe themselves, perhaps to go to sleep, or if they are teething, sick, or just thirsty. Your breastmilk has hormones that help soothe your baby, antibodies to fight illness, and can help decrease your baby’s pain.

**My baby cluster feeds during the evening, then doesn't want to eat at night. Is this okay?**

Yes. Some babies will cluster feed and then take a break from feeding for a while. If your baby is gaining weight, has an acceptable number of wet and dirty diapers, it is fine for the baby to go longer in between feeds.

**Cluster feeding is exhausting. What can I do to cope?**

Many moms find cluster feeding takes a lot of time. But when you know that cluster feedings are coming and prepare, you may enjoy the time. You can use the time to relax and bond with your baby. Ask for help with other work that may need to be done. Get comfortable. Sometimes nursing can cause your uterus to contract, so be sure to manage the pain with comfort measures like deep breathing, comfortable positioning, or using pain medication as directed.

**For more information or help with cluster feeding,  
call ADHS 24/7 Breastfeeding Hotline.**

**Arizona WIC | 24 Hour Breastfeeding Hotline 1-800-833-4642**

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