



So you want to know more about...

Infant Feeding

Prepped For Success

Because breast milk is more easily digested, nursing infants eat frequently, as often as every 2-3 hours during the first few months. Formula-fed infants tend to drink larger amounts less often. In both situations, most infants develop a feeding pattern before they start group care or between 3-6 months of age.

What does that mean for your baby's caregivers? Although this pattern may change at the center, a **"typical" feeding schedule** is very useful information for you to give your teachers. It gives them a framework for reading your baby's cues during those first important days and weeks, and helps them meet her needs efficiently so she can learn to trust them. It's helpful to indicate the **typical amount** of each feeding, the **temperature** she likes the

milk to be, how frequently she usually needs to be **burped**, and any other details.

If you plan to come nurse your baby one or more times during the day, let your caregivers know so they can help your baby be ready for a feeding. Although we always feed hungry babies, we can certainly try to delay a bottle if we know mom will be arriving shortly. It's also important to let us know when you plan to pick up each day. A delay of half an hour can feel like an eternity to a hungry infant and her caregivers. Keeping us abreast (pardon the pun) of **your schedule** will help us support your nursing while we develop a bond with your baby.

Some infants arrive at the center with a relatively established feeding pattern. Don't be alarmed

if your baby's schedule at the center differs from your home schedule.

The center is a relatively exciting place. There's a lot to look at, do, and "digest." For some infants, this means eating less while they're with us. For others, it may mean eating more. In both cases, you should look at the overall amount of their intake before you worry about their nutrition. Does the development of a new routine at school mean the one that worked at home should be tossed? No. Many infants revert to their home patterns when they're there. If you're having difficulty feeding on home days, however, talk to us and we'll work on developing a routine that will better match home *and* center needs.

When to Introduce Solids

Most pediatricians don't recommend introducing solids before 4-6 months of age. Here are some of the cues your baby will give you to let you know she's getting ready:

- Increased breast milk or formula intake and/or shortened time between feedings
- Paying attention to, or reaching for adult food during mealtimes
- Waking at night after having slept through the night for a while.

Check with your pediatrician for recommendations about whether to start cereal or fruits and vegetables first. Always stick to one food at a time to test tolerance. Don't feed from the jar or re-use food that has come in contact with your baby's saliva from the spoon. Last but not least, be patient. Babies need time to adjust to new tastes and textures.

Further reading

- *Your Baby and Child*, by Penelope Leach
- *Nursing Mother, Working Mother*, by Gale Pryor
- *Caring For Your Baby and Child*, by the American Academy of Pediatrics

Storing Breastmilk

Most women start expressing breast milk while they are still on maternity leave. This helps them adjust to pumping and build up a supply. Follow these guidelines for safe storage of expressed milk:

- Fresh milk at room temperature: 6 hours
- Fresh milk, refrigerated: 5 days
- Frozen milk: in a freezer compartment in a refrigerator-freezer with separate doors: 2 months
- Frozen milk: at 0 degrees Fahrenheit: 3 months
- Frozen milk thawed in the refrigerator: 24 hours

Other important points:

- Freeze milk in 3-4 oz portions in sterile bottles. These should be labeled with your child's name, and the date the milk was expressed and frozen.
- Use oldest milk first.
- To thaw frozen milk, place it in the refrigerator, or thaw/warm it under warm running water. Never microwave breast milk as this destroys its immunological benefits.
- Do not refreeze thawed breast milk.
- Shake bottles before feeding to mix in the cream.

Bottles at the Center

All Bottles

- Bottles must be labeled with the child's full name with permanent marker. Gretchen's House will provide labels for parents to fill out and adhere to the **bottle cap** each day.
- Parents may leave a can of ready-mixed formula (not concentrate) at the center for back-up.
- We cannot store bottles from day to day. Any day-old bottles will be discarded.
- We discard leftover milk and formula after feedings, so if your infant takes smaller portions, please prepare smaller bottles.
- When your child moves to whole milk (~ 1 year), you can send enough clean, empty bottles for the day and we will fill them with milk as needed.
- If infants prefer warmed bottles, we use a bottle warmer or warm water bath to heat them.

Breast Milk Bottles

- All bottles must be labeled. The label on the cap must include name, date the bottle came to the center, and the date the milk was expressed.
- Frozen bottles of milk should also be labeled with the date the milk was expressed and frozen. The date can be written above the word "frozen" on the bright pink label the center provides.
- Please leave "extra" breast milk (or back-up formula as described at left) at the center while we figure out your infant's feeding patterns.

Formula Bottles:

- All bottles must be prepared by parents. Please let us know if you use soy formula so we can make sure your infant doesn't get dairy products when s/he starts eating table foods at the center.

Frequently Asked Questions

My baby's eating a lot more at the center than she usually does. She's already chubby — I'm afraid she'll get fat! Baby fat is just that — your child's appearance as an infant is not predictor of her later health. Children *instinctively* eat what they need unless we interfere. By withholding food, adults teach children to ignore their natural cues for hunger and satiety which can lead to feeding issues later on. Your baby may be having a growth spurt, she may be more active at the center than at home, or she may be more stimulated at the center. She will eat less at other times to make up for any "extra" calories, if they are in fact extra.

It's so hard for me to express milk, I don't want you to discard unfinished bottles after a feeding. We understand what a precious commodity breastmilk is! We try not to start a feeding unless we are certain that a baby is hungry. If they doze off or become disinterested in the middle of a bottle, we will not discard the bottle until an hour has passed. Licensing rules are strict on the re-use of bottles to protect the integrity of milk and formula.

I still nurse my 2 year-old. Is that a problem for you? No. Because he will be spending time in care, though, you may want to help him develop some comfort rituals he can share with his new caregivers.