

How to tell if your baby is growing well and developing as expected without getting them weighed

Reassurance for families on how they can monitor babies' growth and development when Well Baby clinics are closed and home visiting has been reduced or no longer available.

National guidance states that babies should be weighed at birth and again during the first week, at 10 days old, six weeks old, and healthy babies should then be weighed no more than once a month after that. Here are some other indicators you can use to check your baby is thriving:

Babies aged 0 to 3 weeks

- In the first 48 hours your baby is likely to have only a few wet nappies. Wet nappies should start to become more frequent.
- Your baby should be fed when they show early cues like: beginning to stir, mouth opening, turning their head and rooting. Crying is the last cue for feeding, and your baby may need to be calmed before feeding.
- Sometimes your baby may need to be nudged to feed more often than they ask for.
- Baby should feed at least eight times in 24 hours – but double this is also normal.
- At first your baby will pass a black tar-like poo called meconium. By day three, this should be changing to a lighter, runnier, olive greenish poo that is easier to clean.
- From around day four, for the first few weeks, your baby should pass two or more yellowish poos each day. Most babies pass lots of poo, and this is a good sign.
- Baby should have at least six wet and two dirty nappies each day. The amount of poo will vary from day to day and baby to baby, but ideally each poo should be at least the size of a £2 coin.
- Your baby should be gaining weight after the first week. An initial weight loss after birth is common, but they should regain their birth weight by around two weeks old.
- Speak to your midwifery or health visiting team if you are worried about baby's weight.
- It is normal for your baby to wake frequently at night for feeding.
- It is normal for baby to want to be held often.
- You should be able to see and feel physical changes in your baby each week, e.g. feeling heavier and filling-out. Compare photos: you should start to see chubbier cheeks, and rolls in arms and legs beginning to form.

Babies aged 3 to 6 weeks

- Your baby should now be back to birthweight. Speak to your midwife or health visitor for additional support.
- Baby should be relaxed during and after feeding.
- Your baby should be doing six or more heavy wet nappies a day, and at least two yellow poos at least the size of a £2 coin.
- Your baby should be feeding roughly every two to three hours, or more frequently.
- You should be able to see more physical changes in your baby: feeling heavier, going up in clothing and nappy sizes.
- It is normal for your baby to wake frequently at night for feeding.
- It is normal for baby to want to be held often.
- Use photos of baby to compare how they look now to how they did last week or the week before.

Babies from 6 weeks

- Baby should be feeding at least 8-10 times in 24 hours, although this may start to spread out for bottle fed babies.
- Your baby should feel heavier, and be increasing in clothing and nappy sizes. When you look at your baby's new-born photos, your baby should visibly have gained weight.
- Your baby will begin to smile and have discovered their fingers and toes. Your baby may now be reaching for toys.
- It's normal for your baby to wake frequently at night for feeding.
- Baby will still want to be held often.
- Babies feed more frequently around six weeks old, to give mum's milk supply a little boost. What you have is enough - but baby is growing - so they need a little more from now on. They are skilled at doing this.
- Bottle-fed babies also go through this, and may want to cluster feed. Offer smaller amounts in the bottle at regular intervals and paced-feeding, rather than trying to get baby to finish lots of milk in one go.
- Try some skin-to-skin if baby is not settling.

- If you have concerns about how your baby is feeding at any stage, you may benefit from additional support from peer supporters. They can advise on feeding issues such as pain or damage to the breasts, breast care, and increasing milk supply. Your midwifery or health visiting team can also help.
- If your baby was born premature or has an underlying condition or current ill health, this information may not be accurate, so stay in contact with your healthcare providers.
- Families with concerns about feeding or development should ask for additional support from a healthcare professional.

Signs baby is NOT growing as expected

- Baby is tired between feeds, not relaxed during feeds, or falling asleep very quickly without much active feeding time.
- Baby is sleeping for four or more hours and not waking by themselves to feed.
- Baby is not doing six or more heavy wet nappies per day or two big yellow poos a day in the first six weeks.
- Baby's poos are frequently brown or green, or are only skid-marks / stains in the nappy.
- Baby's eyes appear sunken.
- Baby's skin is loose or baggy.
- Baby's nappies may be looser.
- Baby's ribcage may be visible.
- Baby appears to have grown in length but does not look to be filling-out.

It can be worrying when baby is not gaining weight as expected. If your baby is showing any of these signs you must seek urgent help from your local infant feeding team.

You may need a specialist care plan to ensure baby's weight does not continue to falter.

If you are breastfeeding: keep breastfeeding even if baby does not grow as expected and seek qualified breastfeeding support.

Begin to supplement with mum's own expressed milk if there is a genuine concern over baby's weight – if any of the above signs are true for your baby.

You may be tempted to use your bathroom scales to weigh your baby, but they are not usually sensitive enough to weigh babies, and it could cause you anxiety. Special baby weighing scales are expensive and are not always necessary for you to feel confident that your baby is growing and developing as expected.

Breastfeeding

- Your breasts and nipples should not be sore. If they are, ask for help from a qualified peer supporter, or a member of your midwifery / health visiting team.
- Baby will be content and satisfied after most feeds and will come off the breast on their own.
- Your post-feed nipple may be longer than it was when it went into baby's mouth, but should not be misshapen, slanted or squashed.
- Breastfed babies typically pass loose poos – like korma sauce. This is normal.
- Fussing at the breast or cluster feeding does not indicate a low milk supply. Sometimes it occurs during a growth spurt, sometimes they simply want to be close to mum.
- Breastfeeding is not just food for a baby, it is also comfort. It is beneficial for your baby and for your hormones, so let baby have time at the breast as often as they request it.
- See [more breastfeeding support information](#).

Bottle feeding

- Your baby may need short breaks during feeding and may need to burp.
- When your baby does not want any more feed, hold them upright and gently rub or pat their back to bring up any wind. They may not always burp.
- Pace feed your baby, and look out for cues that they have had enough. Don't encourage your baby to take more milk than they want. Videos on paced feeding can be found online.

Formula feeding

- Follow all recommendations from the manufacturer about how to safely prepare and serve infant formula. Ready to feed liquid milk is pasteurised and safer to use; powdered milk needs to be made-up with water of at least 70°C to kill any bacteria.
- See [more formula feeding information](#).

Further guidance for you and your baby is available here: [\[INSERT HYPERLINK\]](#)