



I'm Hungry – Watching Infant's Feeding Cues – Guidelines for Child Care Providers

Feeding an infant should be a happy time that takes place when he/she is hungry. Not every infant will be ready to eat every 3 hours or when other infants in his/her room are hungry. Below are some signs that an infant is hungry and ready to eat.

Hunger Cues to Watch for During the First 6 Months:

- ✓ Waking and tossing
- ✓ Making sucking noises or sucking on fist or fingers
- ✓ Moving hands towards mouth
- ✓ Being fussy
- ✓ Beginning or looking like ready to cry

Remember: A crying infant has often reached the point beyond hunger – this is not a good hunger cue! Please note that an infant can be crying for other reasons besides hunger.

It is important to know that most centers have policies for when infants should be fed. As a general guideline, infants should be offered food at least 2 hours apart and not more than 3 hours apart. It is important to know that some young infants may need to be fed more often than every 2 hours to meet their nutrition needs. This is especially true for breastfed infants because nature has designed breastmilk to be taken frequently, because it is easily digested.

Not only is it important to be able to read an infant's hunger cues, it is also important to know when the infant is full. Below are some signs:

- ✓ Sealing the lips together
- ✓ Decreasing the amount of sucking
- ✓ Spitting nipple out/refusing nipple (whether bottle or breast)
- ✓ Pushing breast or bottle away
- ✓ Head turning away from breast or bottle