

Aeroflow Breastpumps

Cluster Feeding

What is Cluster Feeding?

It is normal for babies to feed frequently, especially in the first few weeks of life. Frequent feedings during the day and night increase milk supply and help ensure your baby is getting enough milk. Once milk supply has been established, babies will still feed often, typically ten times or more in a 24 hour period. It is common and necessary for babies to feed several times a night.^{1,2} Most breastfed babies continue to wake for 1 to 2 feeds at night through the first year. It is important to allow cluster feeding to occur naturally, especially during the night, in order to maintain your milk supply and meet baby's needs.^{1,2}

Cluster feeding is when a baby has several short feeds close together over a few hours. This often occurs in the later afternoon and evening, as this is when prolactin levels (your breastfeeding hormones) are lowest and; therefore, breast milk supply may be lower.³ Cluster feeding may last a few days, or a couple of weeks.^{1,2} This is normal newborn behavior. Shorter bursts of cluster feeding occur throughout the first year of life as your baby grows and achieves new milestones. These bursts are known as "growth spurts". Your baby will double their birth weight in 6 months and triple it by their first birthday.^{1,2}

Cluster feeding may also occur from time to time if your baby is not feeling well. Breastfeeding frequently when your baby is sick soothes the baby and provides the antibodies baby needs to get well. This also provides them with the hydration and nutrition they need during this time. When cluster feeding occurs, many parents feel their baby is not getting enough milk and that maybe their supply has dropped. It is important, during this time, to check wet and dirty diapers, and weight gain before starting any supplemental feedings.⁴ Supplementation should only be given if medically indicated.⁴ Newborn babies should have at least 6 wet diapers every day by day 6 and 3 to 4 yellowish stool diapers every 24 hours by day 4 and thereafter.⁵ This stooling pattern will continue for at least the first several months of life.

What Can I Do About Cluster Feeding?

Cluster feeding can lead to feeling both physically and emotionally exhausted. Research has shown cluster feeding occurs more frequently in moms who are more anxious.⁶ Below are a few things to remember:^{1,2}

1. Acknowledge and understand cluster feeding is a normal process in babies.
2. Ask for help from your support partner, family and friends.
3. Nipples could be irritated with the increase in breastfeeding time; make sure to take care of your nipples which may include using your breast milk and/or a single ingredient oil (e.g., coconut) or nipple cream on your nipples after feeding for relief and extra protection.
4. Make sure your baby is latching deeply and try different breastfeeding positions.
5. Take care of yourself during this time, and be patient as you and your baby go through this new experience.
6. If you ever have concerns about your baby's weight gain or your breast milk supply, reach out for help.

What If I Have Questions?

If you are interested in learning more, these Aeroflow classes expand on some of the topics discussed above:

- Ultimate Breastfeeding Prep
- Babycare for the Breastfed Baby
- Lactation Q&A

To register for these classes, log into your portal or click [here](#).

Want More Info?

For a directory of Aeroflow's other Care Guides offering information on pregnancy, baby care, and more, browse our comprehensive list of titles:

<https://www.hersourcehealth.com/aeroflow-care-guides/>

References

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2. <https://wicbreastfeeding.fns.usda.gov/cluster-feeding-and-growth-spurts>
3. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK148970/>
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