

Cue-based feeding in the Neonatal Nurseries



Learning to breastfeed or bottle feed is an important milestone for your baby. Most full term babies are able to feed right from birth. Preterm babies or sick babies may need special help as they learn to feed.

What is cue-based feeding?

Learning how to breast or bottle feed is a demanding job. We want to help your baby learn to feed in a safe and enjoyable way. Cue based feeding means that we watch your baby's cues to help decide when your baby is ready to start feeding, and how to progress feeding.



Cues are your baby's way of talking to us. Your baby talks to us through changes in his or her behaviour, facial expressions, breathing, movement and wakefulness. Your baby's cues and medical needs help guide the feeding plan as your baby learns and grows. Cue based feeding also helps us keep track of how well your baby eats (the quality of feeding), and the strategies that help your baby eat well.

The amount of breast milk or formula your baby eats is important, but the quality of feeding is **more** important.

A successful feeding is a safe and enjoyable experience that matches your baby's individual development.

Infant Driven Feeding Scales[®]

You and the health care team will use the Infant Driven Feeding Scales to assess your baby's feeding cues. There are 3 scales you and the team will use to score your baby. They are laminated by your baby's bedside.

These scales help us decide:

- when your baby is ready to eat (readiness)
- how well he or she eats (the quality of feeding), and
- the strategies that help your baby eat well (caregiver techniques).

The scales are for breastfeeding and bottle feeding. Your baby's feeding scores will change as your baby grows and learns.

The things you do to help your baby feed well are important

You and your baby's team will work together to find the best way to feed your baby. Many babies in the Neonatal Nurseries need extra help as they learn to feed. Your baby may need a special feeding position or extra help to breathe comfortably during feeding. You and your team will come up with an individual plan that works best for your baby.



Learning to read your baby's feeding cues

Feeding your baby is a very special time. Learning how to feed a baby in the Neonatal Nursery is a new experience for most families. You might need some extra help or teaching as you learn how your baby communicates to you during feeding. Your baby's team is here to help.

Feeding plans change

Your baby's feeding plan may change as your baby grows and medical needs change. Cue based feeding helps you and the team follow your baby's lead. Your baby may need extra help to find a plan that works best. Some babies may learn to breastfeed or bottle feed at another hospital if they are ready to transfer closer to home.