

Attachments

Frequently Asked Questions for Early Infancy Education: *Understanding Your Baby's Cues*

Participants often have questions that are not addressed in the class outline or *Getting to Know Your Baby* booklet. These “frequently asked questions” will help the staff answer participants’ questions that may come up during education discussions. Refer to the *Getting to Know Your Baby* booklet for related information.

1. Why is my baby always hungry?

Newborns have very tiny tummies. This means they will be hungry more often than older babies and will need to eat frequently, waking up often during the night.

2. Is There a “Hungry Cry”?

No, babies cry whenever they need something to be different. The best way to tell when a baby is hungry is to watch for cues before he starts to cry. Hungry babies *might* cry but they will ALSO bring their hands to their face, clench their hands, flex their arms and legs, root, or make sucking motions and noises. All these behaviors **together** help us know when a baby is hungry.

3. My baby sucks in his sleep. Does this mean he is hungry and I should wake him up to eat?

Sucking is a reflex. Some babies may make sucking movements while in deep sleep. This is normal. If your baby is eating 10-12 times in a 24 hour period and gaining weight, there is no need to wake him. If you are concerned, ask your medical provider.

4. I recognize hunger and fullness cues, but what other cues can my baby give me?

“I want to be near you cues”: Your baby will open her eyes and look at your face or a toy as if she is trying to memorize what she sees. Her body and face will be relaxed and if she is old enough, she’ll smile. If she is very excited, your baby will kick her legs and squirm with glee. By using “I want to be near you” cues, your baby is asking you to help her learn more about you and her new world.

“I need something to be different cues”: When your baby needs a break from playing or learning, he may close his eyes, turn his face away from you, or arch or twist his body away. His muscles will be tense, and he may frown or look like he is about to cry. It’s time to give your baby a break! Stop what you are doing and reduce stimulation in the environment (noises, bright lights, toys, or interactions) that may be too much for your baby to handle. Although he can tell you he’s bothered by something, he can’t tell you what is bothering him. Sometimes the problem will be obvious; other times you’ll need to be a detective to figure out what has upset your baby.

5. How do I “figure out” what my baby needs?

Look for obvious clues first! Needs diaper change, hungry, tired, overwhelmed. When your baby shows you, “I need something to be different” cues try to figure out what he needs by looking around your environment. Are there sounds and smells that may be bothering your baby? Try turning him away from any activity. Responding to your baby’s cues quickly will help him get better at giving cues. With time you will also get better at responding to these cues.

6. There are way too many cues. How am I supposed to know what my baby needs?

All this information may be overwhelming for you. Let’s make things a little simpler. Remember, babies mainly show 2 types of cues: (1) they either want to be near you and interact or (2) they need something to be different. It’s that simple! As you and your baby get to know each other, you will get better at communicating with one another. Things **will** get easier.



California WIC Program, California Department of Public Health
This institution is an equal opportunity provider.
1-888-WIC-WORKS

