



TEN STEP TUESDAY

# Step 8: Responsive Feeding

## It's Ten Step Tuesday!

This week is the 8th in a series on each of the Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding that form the foundation of the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative.

## STEP 8 – Support mothers to recognize and respond to their infants' cues for feeding.

### Rationale:



- Breastfeeding involves recognizing and responding to the infant's display of hunger and feeding cues and readiness to feed, as part of a nurturing relationship between the mother and infant. Responsive feeding (also called on-demand or baby-led feeding) puts no restrictions on the frequency or length of the infant's feeds, and mothers are advised to breastfeed whenever the infant is hungry or as often as the infant wants.
- Scheduled feeding, which prescribes a predetermined, and usually time-restricted, frequency and schedule of feeds is not recommended.
- It is important that mothers know that crying is a late feeding cue and that it is better to feed the baby earlier, since optimal positioning and attachment are more difficult when an infant is in distress.

### Implementation Guidance:

- Regardless of whether they breastfeed or not, mothers should be supported to recognize and respond to their infants' cues for feeding, closeness and comfort, and enabled to respond accordingly
- When the mother and baby are not in the same room for medical or other justifiable reasons, the facility staff need to bring the mother and infant together as often as possible, so that she can recognize feeding cues.

References: Above text from the 6th Edition of the BFUSA Guidelines & Evaluation Criteria. Baby-Friendly-GEC-Final.pdf (babyfriendlyusa.org)

For more information contact

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## Special Circumstances:

Mothers of late preterm and early term infants on the postpartum unit should be taught to feed with cues. However, it may be necessary for mothers to wake their infants when they do not demonstrate hunger cues. (Try skin to skin to gently rouse baby and encourage feeding cues!)

### Early Cues - "I'm hungry"



Stirring



Mouth opening



Turning head  
Seeking/rooting

### Mid Cues - "I'm really hungry"



Stretching



Increasing physical  
movement



Hand to mouth

### Late Cues - "Calm me, then feed me"



Crying



Agitated body  
movements



Colour turning red

### Time to calm crying baby

- Cuddling
- Skin-to-skin on chest
- Talking
- Stroking

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