



# How to tell if your baby is full?

## Nine faces of feeding

BABY CARE

ARTICLE

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It may seem like a whole new world now that your little one is starting to eat solid foods. Look out for signs your baby is hungry or full, and let her lead the way with how much she wants to eat.

While the principles of feeding you've been following since birth remain the same, there are some new feeding cues to learn now that you are offering your baby complementary foods.

### **Let responsive feeding be your guide**

Your role in feeding your baby is to offer a variety of healthy foods at regular meal and snack times. It is up to your baby to decide if she will eat what is offered, and how much she will eat. As you offer your baby a variety of healthy foods—and follow her lead as far as how much she wants to eat—you are establishing healthy eating habits for your little one that can last for years.

Continue to follow the rules of responsive feeding as you've done since your baby was born (see *Is he hungry? How to read your baby's signs*). This means providing healthy options and letting your baby decide how much to eat, without pressuring her, or restricting how much food she eats. This approach will help keep your baby on track for healthy growth.

Remember that breast milk is still your baby's main source of nutrition. These early days of eating are a good time to begin to teach your baby how she can continue to communicate, later with words, that she is hungry or full. Responding when your baby is hungry by offering nutritious foods, and when she is full by putting down the spoon, can help show her that she is in charge of how much she needs to eat. Practicing these feeding approaches helps set the stage for good eating habits to last a lifetime.

At six to eight months old, there are new hunger and fullness cues your baby may be showing you, which are shown below.



### **FACE 1. The open-mouthed lean**

What to look for: As soon as she sees the approaching loaded spoon, she opens her mouth and leans towards you.

What she's telling you: "My tummy is ready for food!"



### **FACE 2. The spoon snub**

What to look for: As you offer a spoonful of food, he turns his head away.

What he's telling you: "No more thanks, I've had enough."



### **FACE 3. The spoon swipe**

What to look for: She tries to grab or swipe the spoon as you're feeding her. (If she does this, you could also offer her her own spoon to encourage her independence!)

What she's telling you: "I'm hungry, please listen to what I'm telling you!"



### **FACE 4. The clamped mouth**

What to look for: Your offering of food is met with a closed mouth, or even one that's covered by her hands.

What she's telling you: "Enough thanks, I'm full!"



### **FACE 5. The smile**

What to look for: As you're feeding, he responds with a big grin and moves toward the spoon—or opens his mouth.

What he's telling you: "I'm still hungry, keep it coming."



### **FACE 6. The spoon shove**

What to look for: He pushes the approaching spoon away before it gets close to his face. Not to be confused with the spoon swipe (or grab).

What he's telling you: "This mealtime is over."



### **FACE 7. The fussy cry**

What to look for: Fussing or crying as she watches you get her food ready—the cries are different to those she makes when she needs a diaper change or some entertainment.

What she's telling you: "I'm hungry, when's my food coming?"



### **FACE 8. The ejection**

What to look for: He turns his head away from the spoon or spits food out after he accepts the spoon into his mouth.

What he's telling you: "I'm finished!"



### **FACE 9. The distracted gaze**

What to look for: Your little one is repeatedly easily distracted by anything that's not part of eating. He gazes around and ignores the spoon.

What he's telling you: "I'm not interested in food any more. We're done here."

#### **Sources**

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