

## 15 Reasons Why A Baby Might Cry After A Breastfeed

Breastfeeding provides more than nourishment for your baby. It also provides nurturing, warmth, comfort and love.

But what if your baby cries after a breastfeed? She comes off, arches her back, thrashes around and screams! What is this about? Does it mean you don't have enough milk? Does it mean your baby doesn't like breastfeeding? As your blood pressure elevates, and people begin to tell you that you don't have enough milk (and suggest you give her a bottle), you begin to seriously doubt this breastfeeding gig. People may also suggest giving your baby a bottle after a breastfeed, and say that if she drinks more, it means she didn't get enough from you. Could they be right? For a baby who is showing reliable signs of getting enough milk, this is simply not true. Read here to find out what the reliable signs of your baby getting enough milk are.

Drinking From A Bottle Is Different To Drinking From The Breast. When a baby drinks from the breast, she is able to both suck in a way where she gets the milk (nutritive sucking) and suck in a way where she doesn't get the milk (non-nutritive sucking). She may even be at the breast and not suck at all, or just come off. But when a baby drinks from a bottle, she cannot suck in a non-nutritive way. When she sucks, she gets a more continuous flow of milk, and has to keep sucking — else she'll be flooded with milk.

A baby likes to suck for many reasons, not just when she is hungry. For example, she might want to suck to help calm herself down if she is overtired or has pain. If she sucks on a bottle teat, she has no choice but to get milk. In these ways, a baby may drink more milk from a bottle even if she doesn't need it. It's The Reliable Signs That Count. It is normal for babies to drink various volumes at every feed — some feed volumes will be small and some will be bigger. It's what a baby gets over a 24 hour period that counts, not what she gets in a single feed. If your baby shows reliable signs of getting enough milk, she is — even if she cries after a breastfeed.

### Here are 15 reasons why your baby might cry after breastfeeding:

**#1: Your Baby Is Tired.** A baby who is tired (especially overtired) might cry after a breastfeed.

Few young babies settle to sleep well after all breastfeeds. Many healthy young babies will have unsettled periods every day where they cry a lot and sleep little. During unsettled periods, cluster feeding is common, where a baby has many short breastfeeds close together. Typically, after some fussing, a baby will begin sucking at the breast, then fall asleep after a few minutes, only to cry when taken off the breast or put down for a sleep. This cycle can continue for hours, and as such the baby continues to become increasingly tired. The good news is that a longer stretch of sleep tends to follow these unsettled periods, and they tend to cease around 3 months.

**#2: Baby Is Having A 'Wonder Week'** A baby who is having a wonder week might cry after breastfeeds.

A wonder week is when a baby has a leap in her mental and/or physical development. In other words, she is making more connections in her brain to consolidate what she has learnt or is learning. A wonder week may occur when she is working on a new skill such as rolling over, crawling or learning a new concept or idea. Due to her increased brain activity, she may not be able to process things as well as usual and this may cause her to cry more often than usual.

**#3: Baby Is Feeling Emotional Stress.** A baby is sensitive to our feelings. She is generally more content when those caring for her are relaxed and more upset when they are stressed. Hence, a baby might be more likely to cry more often including after breastfeeds during times when you or your family is stressed for any reason.

**#4: Baby Is Teething.** Some mothers find that their baby cries more often (including after breastfeeds) when their baby is teething. This may be because their baby experiences gum soreness when sucking.

**#5: Baby Is Distracted.** An older baby (over the age of 3 months or so) may get distracted by her environment. You might be used to your baby being happy to feed whenever you've popped her on. But many curious older babies might want to look to see what the noise over the other side of the room is and so come off the breast. If you don't allow her to see what is happening around her and instead keep bringing your baby back to the breast, she may get upset and begin crying.

**#6: Baby Has Wind.** Many babies will come off the breast crying if they need to burp or poo. Try to burp your baby between breasts and after feeds. You can do this by placing her over your shoulder. If your baby doesn't burp after a couple of minutes, just move on to the next task (e.g. nappy change or other breast). She will burp when she's ready to. Not all babies (especially

breastfed babies) need to burp after every feed. Once your baby is moving more freely and is able to better sit upright (around 4-6 months), she will be able to burp herself if she needs to.

**#7: Baby Isn't Getting The Right Flow Of Milk.** Some babies pull off the breast crying due a fast or slow flow of breastmilk.

If your baby pulls off your breast soon after your let-down (when milk begins to flow from your breast) and is coughing or gagging, you may have an overactive let-down reflex. Some babies get impatient if your milk is slow to let down, or when the flow slows down after the initial let-down. Your baby might pull off, knead the breast, arch her back and cry. Breast compressions can help your baby to keep getting a flow of milk. Once breast compressions don't help anymore, switch to the other breast. When she fusses again, switch her back to the other side, back and forth, until she loses interest in feeding.

**#8: Baby Doesn't Want To Breastfeed At That Moment.** If your baby cries when brought to the breast, or for sucks a bit and then comes off crying, it may be that she doesn't want to feed at that time — or maybe she has had enough.

Older babies (from around 3 months) often become very efficient at feeding. Some may be finished within a couple of minutes. Your baby's frustration may simply be an indication that she's done and wants to move on. Sometimes it may be that your baby wants to suck for comfort, but doesn't want to get the flow of milk — let alone another let-down reflex occurring. If this is the case, trying to settle her in another way — such as rocking or skin-to-skin contact — can help.

**#9: Baby Prefers One Breast.** A baby may come off one breast crying because she wants to go to the other one. This may be the case if your baby has a strong preference for one breast. Read more about your baby preferring one breast here.

**#10: Baby Has Thrush.** If your baby has oral thrush, this may cause her to pull off the breast and cry due to feeding hurting her mouth. A baby with oral thrush has a cottage-cheese like white material in her mouth (e.g. on her tongue/inside of her cheeks). If you suspect your baby might have oral thrush, see a doctor who will be able to prescribe an appropriate treatment.

**#11: Baby Has A Blocked Nose.** If your baby has a blocked nose, this can make it a bit harder for her to coordinate her breathing and sucking when breastfeeding, so she may come off the breast crying.

If your baby's nose is blocked, it can help to: Position her more upright for feeds. Ensure her chin is touching your breast and her nose is free when she's attached. Keeping her chest in close to yours and providing her with firm support behind her shoulders can help achieve this

**#12: Baby Has Tongue-Tie.** A baby who has a tongue-tie is unable to obtain as deep an attachment to the breast. This can mean that she slips off the breast before she is satisfied, and hence may cry.

**#13: Baby Has A Food Sensitivity.** It's uncommon for signs of a food sensitivity to occur while a baby is being exclusively breastfed. Nonetheless, a baby who has a food sensitivity can be generally more unsettled than a baby without a food sensitivity. A baby with a food sensitivity may experience more tummy pain and wind, and this may cause her to come off the breast crying. If you suspect your baby may have a food sensitivity, see a dietitian who has an interest in lactation and food allergy.

**#14: Baby Has Reflux.** Reflux is common and occurs in most healthy babies. It's where the contents in your baby's stomach travels up through her oesophagus (the tube connecting the mouth to the stomach) and sometimes it comes out her mouth.

Babies tend to have more reflux than adults. This is because they have a liquid diet, their oesophagus is shorter and they spend more time lying down. A small percentage of babies with reflux experience pain too, which may cause them to cry as milk comes up their oesophagus after feeds.

**#15: Baby May Be Getting Too Much Milk.** If you have an oversupply of breastmilk, your baby may have large volume feeds, which might make her quite unsettled and gassy. This might make her come off your breast crying. Read here to find out what you can do to help.

Regardless of why your baby comes off the breast and cries, when you help her to calm down, she will likely come back to the breast later on – whether it's in 20 minutes, an hour or a few hours. It is unusual for a baby under the age of one to refuse the breast and never come back.