

# BREASTFEEDING AND WAKING SLEEPY NEWBORNS

“Never wake a sleeping baby” is good advice for a baby who is breastfeeding effectively and growing robustly. But some babies would rather sleep than eat, and that’s not good. Babies need to breastfeed eight to 12 times a day.

When three hours have passed and its time to wake baby for a feeding, and you unwrap, undress, coo, rub tickle and put baby to the breast only to have her stir, cry a little and then fall back asleep — over and over again — what do you do?

Sleepy babies who are not rooting for the breast simply will not breastfeed. Because of the design of bottle nipples, any caregiver can force a sleepy baby to take a bottle and drink. But even the best lactation consultant cannot make a baby breastfeed if baby is not so inclined. Try gentle waking.

About two hours after the last feed, strip baby down to her diaper and lay her on your bare chest with her head near your chin and her feet on your abdomen. Put a light blanket over the two of you. Usually, baby will wake and begin to root in 20 to 30 minutes

If she doesn’t start rooting within 30 minutes, stimulate her by talking to her and rubbing her back for three or four minutes. If she still doesn’t wake, put her on your chest again for another 15 or 20 minutes.

Baby’s deep sleep/light sleep/wake cycle is about 30 minutes. During deep sleep, baby’s breathing will be quiet and regular. During light sleep it is more irregular and noisier, even though her eyes are closed. If you try to wake baby from deep sleep, feedings will be ineffective.

In about a week, baby will begin waking on her own and signaling when she’s ready to eat. Until she has regained and passed her birth weight, make sure to record the number of daily feedings and wet and “poopy” diapers. Wet diapers should feel heavy, and stools should be easy to scoop — at least a tablespoon or more.

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