



In a world where we love data, certainty and control, you can tie yourself up in knots wondering if your baby is getting enough breast milk! I would love to invent a way of quantifying this as so many breastfeeding parents question their supply and for some it is the reason why they choose to stop breastfeeding. It is very hard to “surrender” and trust that your baby will control the breastfeed to ensure that they have enough. Here is some guidance to reassure families:

1) What goes in must come out

Wet and poo nappies are a great indicator as to whether your baby is getting enough. You will become obsessed with baby poo in the next few months! When it comes to baby poo, we love comparing it to condiments – initial poo (meconium) is like vegemite and will appear in the first few hours of life. As breastmilk switches from colostrum to mature milk, poos become a green or yellow colour (mustard). The number of poos in a day is another indicator that baby is getting enough – expect at least 3 palm sized poos a day up until 6 weeks, although some babies poo every feed! Formula fed babies can poo less due to iron fortification of formula – any Mum who took iron in pregnancy can vouch for the fact this slows bowels down! Breastfed baby poo tends to slow down at the 6 week mark – this is very normal and after this age babies can go 2 weeks without pooing (if you dress them in white and forget a spare nappy when you go out they are sure to do one!). In terms of monitoring wet nappies for hydration, expect 5 “good” wet nappies a day (you can feel the weight of the nappy in your hand), with clear wee and without a strong odour. In the first couple of days of life there may be less urine than this but it then should increase dramatically once milk is in.

2) Behaviour

If bubs is dialled up in any way, remember the two tools – offer more milk, even if you feel like baby has just fed. If breastfeeding this is great for establishing supply and is a very useful tool for calming baby down. If baby remains unsettled after a feed, it can be an indicator that they are not satiated. The caveat to this is the first couple of weeks, where a hungry baby can be a sleepy baby. Whilst you are high fiving your unicorn baby, the time between feeds may inadvertently be extended and then supply can reduce. When there is not enough fuel in the tank, baby may not cue for a feed nor feed as efficiently. This is particularly relevant in a jaundiced baby which can be even sleepier. Please follow the advice of your health professional in this situation.



3) Numbers on the scales

Last, and probably least, is the number on the scales. All babies lose weight when they are born – this is normal. They are expected to regain weight back to their birth weight over the next two weeks, although it can be a slower process, particularly for babies on the larger side at birth. The amount of weight loss that clinicians tend to worry about is more than 10% of baby's birth weight and this is when further intervention may be suggested. From then on, we look at the baby's weight gain plotting it against the WHO growth chart which can be found in your baby's birth book provided by the hospital (blue in SA). This equates to roughly minimum 150g per week for the first 3 months then 100g a week after that. As long as your baby is following a curve, that is reassuring. We encourage families not to weigh their babies more than fortnightly after 6 weeks and to hand over the worry about numbers to us!