

# Growth spurts



Donna Bruschi, IBCLC

## What is a growth spurt?

**A growth spurt is a day or two when your baby has an intense need to nurse.**

Whether you call them growth spurts, frequency days or wonder weeks, your baby will ask to nurse frequently and for long periods of time. When you try to lie baby down, they will either wake immediately or sleep for a short time, demanding to nurse again.

**Growth spurts are temporary.**

While they are called growth spurts, research shows that a mother's daily production of milk stays about the same from month 1 to 6. A growth spurt gives baby a temporary increase of milk and comforting, but doesn't increase the average amount you are making.

**Growth spurts happen several times during the first 6 weeks of life.**

This is when milk production is starting up. Common times for growth spurts also occur around 3 months, 4 months, 6 months and 9 months. They can occur when teeth are developing, when baby is learning a physical skill like rolling, crawling or walking, or when baby is ready to start eating solid food.

**Growth spurts can also happen unexpectedly.**

Growth may be mental or emotional without outward signs at first. They might also happen just before you get your period, when starting daycare, or during busy times in your family's life.

**Growth spurts are different from low milk production and illness.**

**A growth spurt lasts two or three days and the baby's weight gain has been steady in the past.**

**Low milk production is different.**

Low milk production should be considered when a baby is unsatisfied after nearly every feed and wants to nurse all the time over a period of days turning into weeks. The

treatment for low milk production starts with frequent nursing. It also requires professional evaluation to discover and treat the underlying cause.

**Frequent nursing might be a sign your baby is getting sick.**

Fussiness and a need to nurse non-stop might also be the first signs of your baby getting sick. Signs of an illness include diaper rash, fever, runny nose, cough, vomiting, or ear infection.

**Suggestions for relieving the symptoms:**

- Nurse frequently and on demand.
- Clear your schedule for a day or two
- Keep baby close so they can be nursed before they get upset.
- You may need to eat or drink more during a growth spurt, if you feel hungry or thirsty.

**When to call my healthcare provider?**

If you see no decrease in feeding frequency after 3 days, your baby is upset while nursing, or your baby is not gaining enough weight, call your healthcare provider and/or IBCLC to discuss other possibilities for your baby's behavior and your milk production.

**Additional resources:**

<https://www.llli.org/breastfeeding-info/frequency-feeding-frequently-asked-questions-faqs/>

<https://kellymom.com/hot-topics/growth-spurts/>

<https://www.breastfeeding.asn.au/bfinfo/fussy-periods-and-wonder-weeks>

Retrieved 03/2022