

# Weight loss in newborn babies

**This leaflet explains why some babies need further assessment and a feeding plan. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak with your midwife or GP.**

## Introduction

Some weight loss in the first days after birth is normal and usually relates to body fluid adjustments. This weight loss usually stops after about 3 or 4 days of life and most infants have returned to their birth weight by 3 weeks of age.

If your baby has lost more than 10% of their birth weight, our staff will carry out a feeding assessment. This will take into consideration what has happened so far including any challenges, you have faced as well as observing a feed to help you look for signs that the feed is effective. Sometimes even minor adjustments in how you attach your baby can make a difference to how efficiently your baby feeds. A feeding plan will be discussed and agreed between yourself and the team. Feeding plans often include feeding your baby each time you observe a feeding cue from your baby (feeding cues include but are not limited to wakefulness, poking their tongue out and mouthing their hands) and importantly ensuring that your baby is fed a minimum of 8 times in 24 hours.

Please ask for support with feeding if you feel unsure or have concerns. . You may want to start expressing some of your milk and offer a supplement to your baby for a few days to ensure baby is fully hydrated and starts to regain some weight.

## How you can recognise that your baby is feeding well

### By day 5\* your baby:

- Feeds at least 8 times in 24 hours\*. Typically a newborn will feed 10-12 in 24 hours.
- Appears calm and relaxed when feeding and has periods of contentment between feeds.
- Takes deep rhythmic sucks and you can see your baby's jaw and throat working as they swallow.
- Feeds last between 5-40mins and during this time you see your baby feeding effectively.
- Has a normal skin colour is alert and wakes for feeds.
- Hasn't lost more than 10% from birth weight.
- Has heavy and wet nappies (at least 5 in 24 hours\*) and usually has at least 2 dirty ones (at least £2 coin size and yellow\*), with the right colour of poo, according to the age of your baby, ranging from meconium at the beginning, changing stool to yellow on day 5 or before.
- If breastfeeding: your breasts and nipples are comfortable and not misshapen at the end of feeding.

If your baby has lost more than 12.5% from birth weight, then we recommend a full review of baby's wellbeing by a doctor (paediatrician). Your baby will be examined and may have a blood

test to check for dehydration. The doctor will talk to you about how your baby is feeding, your baby's behaviour and any concerns you might have such as nappy content.

If you are at home then we recommend that you bring your baby into the RBH for this review. Our community staff will arrange this for you. Pack a bag for yourself and your baby as you might need an overnight stay.

### **Overcoming the challenge:**

We would recommend continuing with breastfeeding at least 8 times in 24 hours, (after having the feed observed and any adjustments made to the latch), frequent expressing (8 times in 24 hours) and supplementing your baby after most feeds. This will usually boost your baby's weight and safeguard your supply.

Sometimes we may suggest using formula as a "quick temporary fix", and only if there is not enough breast milk. We will support you to continue with breastfeeding and expressing, as regular formula use is known to affect a mother's supply.

It may feel a bit overwhelming to find that your baby has lost a lot of weight, especially if you and the baby are readmitted. Our staff will make you feel as comfortable as possible whilst supporting your feeding. Some mothers will continue to supplement for a few days until the baby is stable. We can provide further breastfeeding support once you are home again and you will soon see the signs of effective feeding, (see above, the nappy reveals all) as the baby recovers and puts on weight.

Most babies regain birth weight by 3 weeks.

Our staff can provide you with extra support, where needed, and we recommend a review of your feeding plans with one of the Infant Feeding Team specialist midwives.

### **References:**

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng75/chapter/Recommendations#weight-loss-in-the-early-days-of-life>

To find out more about our Trust visit [www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk](http://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk)

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

Claire Carter, June 2019

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