

# Feeding: Nutritive Stages

The 3 Stages of Nutritive Feeding

Your baby starts to eat

# Nutritive Stages

- ▶ There is no certain age, weight or time when your baby should be able to feed well
  - ▶ The average age to start feeding is 34 weeks
  - ▶ Some babies learn to eat everything quickly and some can take as long as a few weeks after their due date to feed well every time
- ▶ In the NICU, we watch for your baby's cues to know when to start offering bottle and breast feedings, how long each feeding should last and how often a baby is fed
- ▶ There are 3 stages of nutritive feeding
  - ▶ In these 3 stages your baby will begin to develop sucking and swallowing of breast milk/formula
  - ▶ The focus of these stages will be to give your baby a good feeding experience so they can feed well and easily

# Nutritive Stages - Stage 1

## ▶ The Goal of this stage:

- ▶ Start introducing milk or formula with breastfeeding or bottle feeding
- ▶ Do not push your baby to advance too quickly

## ▶ You should expect:

- ▶ Your baby should be quietly alert at cares
- ▶ You will start to see your baby root - open mouth and maybe turn their head
- ▶ Your baby needs to show good sucking on the pacifier with milk drops without holding their breath or having a lower heart rate
- ▶ Your baby will not show these cues every care time and can still benefit from milk drops on a pacifier if they are not ready to eat every feeding
- ▶ Your baby will likely be using a slow nipple and requiring feeding interventions from you like pacing and side-lying
- ▶ Your baby will still get most of their feedings through their feeding tube

# Nutritive Stages - Stage 1

## ▶ What You Can Do:

- ▶ Review the I'm ready pictures on the website
- ▶ If you are breastfeeding, encourage your baby to practice at an un-pumped breast as much as you can if they are showing signs of being ready
- ▶ Work with the Occupational Therapist (OT) and RN to learn positioning and pacing skills
- ▶ When doing diaper changes/other cares and transferring your baby to your lap for feeding, remember to move them as little as possible
  - ▶ The more the baby moves around before a feeding, the more stressed they get and they may need more time to eat safely
- ▶ STOP feeding your baby when they show signs of stress with feeding.
  - ▶ These stress signs include:
    - ▶ Review the I'm overwhelmed pictures on the website
    - ▶ Low muscle tone in mouth, arms and neck
    - ▶ Blue tone around eyes and mouth
    - ▶ Choking, coughing, holding breath
    - ▶ Monitor readings that show the baby's stress
- ▶ **Be Patient!!!**

# Nutritive Stages - Stage 2

## ▶ The Goal of this stage:

- ▶ Start increasing the amount of milk or formula your baby takes
- ▶ We want your baby's ease of sucking, swallowing and breathing while feeding
  - ▶ They will likely still need a slow nipple and possibly rest periods or other feeding interventions from you
- ▶ Do not push your baby to advance too quickly

## ▶ You should expect:

- ▶ Your baby should be quietly alert state at cares or before cares
- ▶ You will see the readiness cues discussed in Stage 1 more often
  - ▶ These cues are sometime very clear and sometimes they are not
- ▶ Remember this is still a practice stage
  - ▶ Cues may not be present every time
  - ▶ If they are not ready to eat every feeding, it is still good for them to take milk drops on a pacifier
  - ▶ Your baby will still get some of their feedings through their feeding tube

# Nutritive Stages - Stage 2

## ▶ What You Can Do:

- ▶ If you are breastfeeding, encourage practice here at an un-pumped breast as much as you can if they are cuing (showing signs that they are ready)
- ▶ If possible, adjust your visiting schedule to when your baby is awake and feeding if you notice a pattern
- ▶ Do not try feeding your baby if they are sleepy or not showing interest in eating
- ▶ When doing diaper changes/other cares and transferring babies to your lap for feeding, remember to move them as little as possible
  - ▶ The more they move around before a feeding, the more stressed they get
  - ▶ They may need more time to eat safely
- ▶ STOP feeding your baby when they show signs of stress with feeding
  - ▶ These stress signs include:
    - ▶ Review the I'm overwhelmed pictures on the website
    - ▶ Low muscle tone in mouth, arms and neck
    - ▶ Blue tone around eyes and mouth
    - ▶ Choking, coughing, holding breath
    - ▶ Monitor readings that show the baby's stress
    - ▶ **If your baby shows any of these signs, stop the feeding right away and let the nurse know**

# Nutritive Stages - Stage 3

- ▶ The Goal of this stage:
  - ▶ Feedings will be only from breast or bottle
  - ▶ Try feeding your baby when they wake up and as they ask for it instead of a strict every 3-4 hours schedule
- ▶ You can expect:
  - ▶ Your baby may be quietly or actively alert on their own before cares
  - ▶ You will see hunger and readiness to feed cues
  - ▶ Your baby will be able to suck/swallow/breathe more easily
    - ▶ You will be providing very little pacing or other feeding help and your baby may be able to use a faster nipple with a higher flow rate

# Nutritive Stages - Stage 3

## ▶ What You Can Do:

- ▶ Become the feeding expert with your baby!
  - ▶ You are the one that will be feeding them at home...not us!
- ▶ Make sure you have purchased the bottle and nipple you will be using at home
  - ▶ If you have questions, ask your occupational therapist (OT), speech therapist (ST) or RN
  - ▶ If you would like to try a bottle other than Dr Brown's, see the Bottle Feeding Lesson and discuss with your OT or ST
- ▶ Your baby is almost ready to go home!