Baby cues: hungry

This is a transcript of the Raising Children Network video available at https://raisingchildren.net.au/babies/behaviour/crying/baby-cues.

Narrator: Newborns need to feed every two or three hours, so if your baby starts to fuss and she hasn’t been fed in the last hour or so, checking if she’s hungry is a good start. Some little babies skip the signs and start yelling as soon as they feel hungry. If you tune in to your baby and know when she might be hungry, you might notice some signs that she’s ready for a feed.

[On screen text: I’m hungry
  • Sucking noises
  • Opening mouth and turning head towards breast]

For example, she might start making sucking noises or opening her mouth wide and turning towards your chest as if she’s looking for the breast. Let’s see what these cues look like in real babies.

[On screen text: Sucking noises]

[On screen text: Opening mouth and turning towards breast]

For newborns, start looking for these cues every one or two hours, or every three to four hours for an older baby. Your baby might also suck her fingers or fist when she’s hungry, but, at around three to four months, babies start doing this for comfort or because it’s interesting, so it won’t always mean it’s feed time.

Looking for baby’s hungry signs is a better way to work out when to feed than waiting a set number of hours.

As your baby gets older, it’ll be easier to tell when he’s hungry. He might get excited when he sees you getting his food ready and lean towards you and open his mouth as you feed him. He’ll also tell you when he’s had enough by turning his head away from the spoon, losing interest and getting distracted or pushing the spoon away.