



[Healthy Children](#) > [Ages & Stages](#) > [Baby](#) > [Feeding & Nutrition](#) > Amount and Schedule of Formula Feedings

Ages & Stages

AA Like 44

Amount and Schedule of Formula Feedings

After the first few days, your formula-fed newborn will take from 2 to 3 ounces (60–90 ml) of formula per feeding and will eat every three to four hours on average during her first few weeks. (Breastfed infants usually take smaller, more frequent feedings than formula-fed infants.)

During the first month, if your baby sleeps longer than four to five hours and starts missing feedings, wake her up and offer a bottle.

By the end of her first month, she'll be up to at least 4 ounces (120 ml) per feeding, with a fairly predictable schedule of feedings about every four hours.

By six months, your baby will consume 6 to 8 ounces (180–240 ml) at each of four or five feedings in twenty-four hours.

On average, your baby should take in about 2 1/2 ounces (75 ml) of formula a day for every pound (453 grams) of body weight. But he probably will regulate his intake from day to day to meet his own specific needs. So instead of going by fixed amounts, let him tell you when he's had enough. If he becomes fidgety or easily distracted during a feeding, he's probably finished. If he drains the bottle and still continues smacking his lips, he might still be hungry.

There are high and low limits, however. Most babies are satisfied with 3 to 4 ounces (90–120 ml) per feeding during the first month and increase that amount by 1 ounce (30 ml) per month until they reach a maximum of about 7 to 8 ounces (210–240 ml). If your baby consistently seems to want more or less than this, discuss it with your pediatrician. Your baby should drink no more than 32 ounces (960 ml) of formula in 24 hours. Some babies have higher needs for sucking and may just want to suck on a pacifier after feeding.

Initially it is best to feed your formula-fed newborn on demand, or whenever he cries because he's hungry. As time passes, he'll begin to develop a fairly regular timetable of his own. As you become familiar with his signals and needs, you'll be able to schedule his feedings around his routine.

Between two and four months of age (or when the baby weighs more than 12 pounds [5.4 kg]), most formula-fed babies no longer need a middle-of-the-night feeding, because they're consuming more during the day and their sleeping patterns have become more regular (although this varies considerably from baby to baby). Their stomach capacity has increased, too, which means they may go longer between daytime feedings—occasionally up to four or five hours at a time. If your baby still seems to feed very frequently or consume larger amounts, try distracting him with play or with a pacifier. Sometimes patterns of obesity begin during infancy, so it is important not to overfeed your baby.

The most important thing to remember, whether you breastfeed or bottlefeed, is that your baby's feeding needs are unique. No book can tell you precisely how much or how often he needs to be fed or exactly how you should handle him during feedings. You will discover these things for yourself as you and your baby get to know each other.

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