

NEWBORN BEHAVIOR and Common Cues



When you are just getting to know your newborn, it can be challenging to understand their behavior. Since newborns cannot smile or speak yet, it may be tricky to know how they are feeling or what they need. While yawning or rooting may easily convey sleepiness or hunger, there are other subtle cues that may express your baby's desires. Here are four typical newborn behaviors and moods to know so you can respond to cues with confidence.



HUNGRY

- Smacking or licking lips
- Sucking on fingers, hands, lips, or anything close by
- Rooting (opening mouth and turning head to the side)
- Positioning for nursing by laying back or pulling clothes
- Restless squirming or fidgeting
- Crying and agitated (late hunger cue)



SLEEPY

- Blank stare
- Turning head from side to side
- Flushed eyebrows
- Rubbing eyes
- Rubbing or pulling on ears
- Large yawns
- Becoming rigid (late sleepy cue)
- Frantic hysterical crying (late sleepy cue)
- Balling hands up into fists (late sleepy cue)



SEEKING CONNECTION

- Awake and alert
- Baby makes eye contact with you
- Hands reach out to you
- Follows you with their eyes
- Smooth movements (not startled)

What you can do:

- Hold your baby and talk to them
- Read a story
- Sing a song
- Play with a newborn toy



NEEDS A BREAK

- Turns head away
- Startled movements and kicking
- Discontinues eye contact
- Arches back, frowns or becomes fussy
- Limp or stiff posture

What you can do:

- Swaddle in a thin lightweight blanket
- Hold while shushing softly in their ear
- Hold baby in a quiet, dimly lit room
- Gently rock baby or give a nap if needed