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81. NORMAL FEEDING PATTERNS OF EXCLUSIVELY BREASTFED INFANTS: EVIDENCE FROM TIME USE DATA

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Aim: New mothers need to know what to expect when they are breastfeeding their babies. This study aimed to provide information on the frequency of breastfeeding, the time taken by breastfeeding, and the amount of milk consumed throughout the day.

Methods: Two studies of Australian mothers who were exclusively breastfeeding their babies on demand were undertaken. One study recorded the start and finish times of all meals (breastfeeding sessions, one or both breasts) for 7 days and nights at 3 months (n = 85) and again at 6 months of lactation (n = 16). In the other study babies were test-weighed before and after every breastfeed during one 24-h period and times recorded. Results were grouped for babies aged 4-9 weeks (n = 12), 10-17 weeks (n = 31), and 18-26 weeks (n = 28).

Results: Babies fed most frequently (14% of meals) between 0500 and 0800 and least frequently (7% of meals) between 2300 and 0500. Frequent feeding also occurred between 1700 and 1900. The largest meals were between 0500 and 0800 (123 mL) and large meals were also consumed between 2300 and 0500 (117 mL). The smallest meals were between 2000 and 2300 (72 mL). The longest meals (34 min) were between 2300 and 0500. For 3-month-

old babies the shortest meals (16 min) were between 0800 and 1100, while for 6-month-old babies the shortest meals (14 min) were between 0700 and 0900. Within-day breastfeeding patterns were similar for all groups. However, compared with younger babies, 6-month-old babies had fewer, shorter, larger meals.

Conclusions: Mothers should expect breastfed babies to feed frequently, particularly in the early morning and early evening, and understand the importance of nighttime and early morning feeds for total milk intake.

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