

Size: 383.77 sq. cm.

One minute demand feeding's all the rage, the next mums are being told to feed by the clock. What should we be doing? Mum Emily Lawrence Gazal investigates

# Demand feeding vs routine

...my program. I have  
...the decision to put my  
...my wife's reaction to  
...weeks and weeks from  
...the hospital. The world  
...demand feeding me and  
...and weeks of a baby  
...banged away my head all  
...and a night. I actually  
...and when the baby was  
...I could tell how what  
...was going on and what to  
...expect, that's how wrong

**What happened to me**  
I followed a routine – or tried to – that accounted for every minute of the day. If I was a few minutes out I was terrified it would ruin the routine and I'd be back to square one. Only problem was I never got off square one. My baby simply would not fit into the prescribed routine: sometimes he wanted to feed every two hours; he didn't sleep for the magical five hours during the night and; some days he was just hungrier or more tired.

I was completely miserable, I felt a failure. The routine was meant to make our lives easier and it was driving all of us

crazy. And the thought kept nagging at me – how can every baby be the same? Surely they don't all want to feed or sleep at the same time. They're not machines! After a few weeks, I scrapped the routine and finally things started to flow.

**Feeding according to need**  
All the experts contacted for this article advocated demand feeding for the first couple of months of a baby's life. After that, it's up to you to either continue that or maybe commence a loose routine. *M&B* expert and lactation consultant Jenni James says, "The words 'demand feed' have negative connotations. It's an important distinction to make that you're feeding according to the baby's need meaning when they're hungry rather than them demanding you feed them. Breastfed babies know what they need in order to grow and thrive."

So does this mean that if you impose adult notions of discipline and time on your baby, he'll be unhappy and hungry? Maybe, maybe not.

The classic 'four-hourly feed' routine is a relic from the past. As Jenni says, "a breastfed baby doesn't feed to a four-hourly schedule. What are those mothers doing to postpone the feed?"

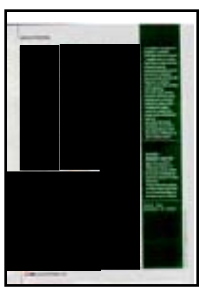
Of course, there will be the odd angelic baby who does fit into the four-hour schedule and sleeps through the night, but most babies do not.

My grandmother was instructed not to breastfeed before four hours was up. Her babies would be crying their little heads off and she would be crying too, but she thought she was doing 'the right thing'

"There's all this negative stuff about mothers responding instinctively to their babies but the truth is women usually have good instincts about their own babies," Jenni says. "Modern women are fighting nature when they dig their heels in and say 'I won't feed you now' to a hungry baby."

**Building supply**  
Newborn babies have small tummies, points out Lee King, director of the Australian





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Breastfeeding Association. "Generally, it's important to give them frequent feedings until their tummies grow after a couple of months."

Your milk supply will also benefit from demand feeding. The more you feed, the more milk you'll make! And for those that are worried about spoiling the baby - don't. "You can't spoil a newborn baby," asserts Monica Hughes of NSW parent support service, Karitane Nursing Association.

### So when to feed?

The best thing to do is accept the fact that the feeds will be all over the place in those first few months.

Karitane's Monica Hughes states that anywhere from 6-12 feeds in a 24-hour period, are normal in a newborn. Some parts of the day they might want to feed more often than others.

But the experts do not recommend feeding any more than every two hours from the start of one feed to the beginning of the next.

### 'My baby fed every half hour'

We all know horror stories of women demand feeding. Georgie Campbell, 32, says, "My first baby, Monty, was on the breast every half hour. He didn't empty it; he just used it like a dummy. He was never content and never slept for longer than an hour at a time." But, isn't that what demand feeding is all about?

No, no, no, says ABA's Lee King. "Women call us up and say they're feeding every hour. They think that's demand feeding," she says.

Jenni James agrees. "Some women interpret every grizzle as 'I'm hungry' and the baby will nibble and be happy momentarily but that's not proper feeding." Monica Hughes maintains, "Make sure they're not just snacking."

And all the experts stress that you shouldn't let your baby feed for five minutes and then fall asleep. "What a waste of time" says Lee. "Encourage them to take around an hour for those first couple of

months." But no longer than an hour. "One and a half to two hours means the baby is probably not attached properly," she adds. Kathryn Lascelles, a lactation consultant, says, "The baby can become over-stimulated from all the food going through which can create a lot of activity in the digestive tract."

### Night feeds - the truth

"Babies learn the difference between night and day fairly early on," says Lee King. "If they're waking up more than three times a night, there's a problem."

Some women swear by waking their baby every three hours during the day to feed. Lee King is doubtful that this method works. "As babies get older they sleep longer anyway... The more we try and squeeze them into a routine, the more work we make for ourselves." And you could end up getting less sleep yourself. Mum Emma Coombe, 26, says, "I woke my baby to feed at 10pm at night and that was meant to mean he'd have his long sleep after. It didn't work. He'd still wake up twice more."

However, it might be worth waking a baby that sleeps for 4-5 hours during the day.

### But I want a routine!

Tresillian and Karitane agree that after a couple of months, if a woman isn't coping with the erratic feeds and sleeps, they can start a flexible routine. "Mothers who are having problems come to us," says Monica Hughes. "We talk about a sleep-feed-play routine. When the baby is rested they'll feed better and after a little awake time they can learn to settle without the breast." A three to four hourly schedule can work but remember, even if all seems to be going well in your new routine, baby can wake up on day or night with other ideas!





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6-12 feeds in 24 hours are normal in a newborn. Feed baby when he wants it - roughly every 2-4 hours. Take time to make sure he's attached properly. Each feed should be over in an hour for a newborn. By 3-4 months the feed will take just 20 minutes. Listen to your baby sucking and swallowing. If he falls asleep during the feed, wake him up by tickling him on his feet, taking his clothes off or changing his nappy. Ensure he empties the breast before offering the next one. His needs will change constantly, so try not to put expectations on him. Every baby is different, so don't compare yours!

Be flexible. Remember: sleep-feed-play every 3-4 hours. When your baby is 8-6 weeks they can be awake for an hour including the feed then sleep for at least two hours. If they wake after 40mins re-settle rather than feed. A 6-12 week old baby can be awake up to 1 1/2 hours.

FROM THE MOUTHS OF MUMS