

Baby Behavior: Early Infancy Cues

Who: Postpartum women and infants, birth to 6 weeks

Why: Understanding normal baby behavior has been shown to increase exclusive breastfeeding, decrease WIC formula use and infant overfeeding. Parents feel more confident in taking care of their newborn if they understand baby cues.

Time: 25 – 30 minutes

Objectives: By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- Recognize at least one hunger cue
- Recognize at least one fullness cue
- Identify at least one sign their baby needs something to be different
- Describe one action they can take to respond to their infant needing something to be different
- Identify at least one sign their baby wants to be near them

Lesson

- Overview:**
1. Introduction
 2. Concept: Hunger and fullness cues
 3. Concept: “I need something to be different” cues
 4. Concept: “I want to be near you” cues
 5. Closing

Materials: Early Infancy Class Clips DVD
Handout: Understanding Your Baby’s Cues/What Your Newborn is Saying (for classroom use only)
DVD player or computer

Introduction

- Begin with a warm welcome
- Give overview of class session
- Introductions

“Congratulations on the birth of your baby! Welcome to today’s class about understanding your newborn’s cues. My name is _____ and I will be leading class today. Let’s go around the room and have each of you introduce yourself and your baby. If you would like, share your baby’s name and if you have other children.”

After introductions, set the agenda by providing an overview of the class.

“Today we will talk about communicating with your infant. We will discuss your infant’s hunger and fullness cues. We will also talk about how to tell when your baby needs something to be different

and how to respond. Finally, we will talk about cues your infant gives when he or she wants to be near you."

Concept: Hunger Cues

"Babies are born with the ability to communicate. Babies use their bodies and make noises to let their parents know when they need to eat, learn, play, or rest. These are called cues. Newborn babies are good at giving hunger cues because they need to be fed often due to their very small stomachs. Who would like to share one way your baby lets you know he is hungry?"

- Allow time for participants to respond
- **OPTIONAL:** Facilitator can write responses on a flip chart
- **Answers:**
 - Keeping his hands near his mouth
 - Bending his arms and legs
 - Making sucking noises
 - Puckering his lips
 - Searching for nipple (root)

"Babies will usually give several hunger cues at one time. For example, they may suck on their hands, root and make sucking noises all at one time."

"What questions do you have about hunger cues?"

Concept: Fullness Cues

Pass out "Understanding Your Baby's Cues/What Your Newborn is Saying" handout

"This handout lists hunger and fullness cues. Fullness cues can sometimes be a bit trickier to recognize than hunger cues. Let's look at the fullness cues section on the handout together."

- Read aloud: "When your baby is full he may:"
 - Suck slower or stop sucking
 - Relax his hands and arms
 - Turn away from the nipple
 - Push away
 - Fall asleep"

"Let's watch a video clip of a baby showing us that he is full."

- Show the "Fullness with Narration" clip

"Now let's watch the video clip again."

- Play the fullness clip again, without narration this time
- Point out the fullness cues again as the bottle fed infant demonstrates them
- Emphasize that **sucking is a reflex**. Bottles keep delivering milk, which results in babies having to swallow.

"Take a moment to think about how your baby lets you know he or she is full. Turn to your neighbor and describe the fullness cues your baby gives you."

- Allow a few minutes for participants to discuss

- Invite participants to share what they discussed
- **OPTIONAL:** If class is small, simply ask participants to share.

Concept: "I Need Something to Be Different" Cues

"Hunger and fullness cues are only some of the cues that babies give. Our next video clip talks about two main cues that babies use to communicate their needs. Let's listen to Dr. Jane talk about how babies show you 'I want to be near you' and 'I need something to be different' cues."

- Show "Other Cues" clip

"Ok, let's first talk about the cues babies give when they 'need something to be different.' Look at the back of the handout. Would anyone like to the section: 'I need something to be different' section?"

- If no one volunteers, the facilitator will read the section
- "Learning is hard work for babies and they can tire quickly. Your baby will show you signs that he needs something to be different. He might:
 - Look away, turn away, or arch his back
 - Frown or have a glazed look in his eyes
 - Stiffen his hands, arms or legs
 - Yawn or fall asleep

Responding to your baby's cues quickly and early before your baby starts to get fussy may help your baby cry less."

"Without using words your baby can tell you he needs something to be different. As a parent, you will have to figure out **what** needs to be different. Let's watch another video clip. The mom in this clip just breastfed her baby a few minutes ago."

- Show "Fussy Baby" clip

"What did you see the baby doing to let her mom know that she needed something to be different?"

- Pause and allow participants to respond
- Affirm responses

Possible responses:

- Wiggling
- Arm and body movements
- Fussing
- No hunger cues

"What do you think might be bothering the baby in the video?"

- Pause and allow participants to respond
- Affirm responses

Possible responses:

- Needs diaper change
- Needs to pass gas
- Needs to burp
- Needs to be held
- Is in an uncomfortable position

"What could mom do differently?"

- If a participant says baby needs to be fed, point out reasons why the cues baby is giving are not hunger cues.

"Newborn babies may be sensitive to what's going on inside their bodies. Some babies might get fussy a few minutes after feeding. Be patient. She may need to burp, pass gas or poop."

"Babies can also be bothered by what's going on outside of their body, in their environment. As we watch the next video clip, look for cues this baby needs something to be different."

- Show "Baby and Sister" clip

"What did you see the baby doing to show she needs something to be different before she started to cry?"

- Pause and allow time for participants to respond
- Affirm responses

Possible responses:

- Furrowed brow
- Trembling lip
- Turns head

"Family, friends, bright lights and noises can overwhelm a newborn. What can you do when you notice your baby is getting overwhelmed by something or someone?"

- Pause for response
- Affirm responses
- Answer: "When your baby gets fussy, look to see what's going on around her. Try turning her away from any activity or noise, and hold her close to your body. This can help prevent some crying."

"What questions do you have about your baby's cues that he needs something to be different?"

FACTS ABOUT "I NEED SOMETHING TO BE DIFFERENT" CUES:

When a baby gives cues that she is overwhelmed, give her a break from the world ...

- Turn her away or stop the activity and hold her close to your body.
- Change the environment. People or noises can be very tiring for babies. Move her away from the noise and wait until she is ready to interact again.
- Lay her down for a nap if she is tired. Quiet time is good for both of you!
- Teach siblings about baby cues. Show them how baby lets them know she needs a break.



Concept: "I Want to Be Near You" Cues

"Now let's talk about cues your baby gives to show he's ready to interact, learn and play. Look at the section of the handout that says 'I Want to Be Near You.' Who would like to read that section?"

- If no one volunteers, facilitator will read from the handout

"As your newborn gets older, you will be better able to tell when he is ready to interact, learn or play. He might:

- Have a relaxed face and body
- Follow your voice and face
- Reach towards you
- Stare at your face
- Raise his head"

"Now turn to your neighbor and describe how your baby uses cues to let you know he or she wants to be near you. How do you respond?"

- Pause and allow time for participants to discuss with each other

"Who would like to share what they discussed?"

- Listen and affirm responses
- **OPTIONAL:** If class is small, simply ask participants to share.

"Newborns always need to be close to their caretakers. When babies give 'I want to be near you' cues, this is a special time for you and your baby. It is the perfect time to play, sing, or talk to your baby. It is important to know that newborn babies tire easily and this playing and learning time may be very short."

Closing

"Babies mainly show only two types of cues - they either want to be near you and interact or they need something to be different. It's that simple! As you and your baby get to know each other, you will get better at communicating and things will get easier."

"What is one thing we talked about today that you want to remember?"

- Pause and wait for response
- Invite sharing and affirm responses

Thank participants for attending the Baby Behavior Early Infancy class. Remind participants to leave the laminated handouts for the next class.