



# Western Upper Peninsula Health Department **BREASTFEEDING**

*The quarterly newsletter for breastfeeding information*



## **HUNGER CUES**

*Identifying what behaviors to look for to know your baby is hungry*

Since babies can't tell parents their needs it can become difficult or frustrating for parents to know when they are hungry. Fortunately, babies have other ways of letting parents know by showing hunger cues.

**Surprise: the last hunger cue is crying.**

Babies will give you many different clues to let you know they're getting hungry. If you can catch these clues early and put your baby to your breast, they will be easier to latch.

A few hunger cues you can look for are:

- sucking on fingers (this can be both self-soothing or a hunger cue).
- mouth wide open, reaching for their parent.
- sticking their tongue out.
- crying.





Above are examples of the hunger cues listed on the first page.

Remember that sucking on fingers can be a hunger cue, or self soothing technique. Crying is the last hunger cue. Most likely your baby will have shown signs of each of the others first. The goal is to catch these signs before baby starts crying as it is much easier to latch a calm baby. Of course you won't always be able to catch the first cues and that's okay.

Ultimately, **you** will learn and know your baby best.

If you reach the point where baby is crying and hungry, a couple things you can do to calm baby before attempting to bring them to your breast are:

- rocking your baby.
- shushing or singing to your baby.
- hand expressing some milk onto your nipple or a spoon and giving it to baby to let them know they can settle down because it is time to eat.

Happy and content babies appear to be more relaxed. They have closed mouths, playful smiles, and resting peacefully.



**By taking the time to recognize and learn your babies behaviors, you will be able to give your baby what they need more quickly and effectively. By doing so you will be saving yourself and your baby from unnecessary added frustration and difficulties.**

*Always remember you can ask for help by contacting your local WIC agency or breastfeeding peer support person  
This institution is an equal opportunity provider*

