



Our team of nurses, lactation consultants, neonatal nurse practitioners, neonatologists, physical and occupational therapists, and speech therapists are here to help and support you as you and your baby learn together.

Ask your nurse about our side-lying video.



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The SOFFI Feeding Method

A Parent's Role in Infant-Led Feeding in the NICU



The SOFFI Feeding Method



What is the SOFFI Feeding Method?

SOFFI stands for “Supporting Oral Feedings in Fragile Infants.” This feeding method helps you learn your baby’s cues to create a safe and happy feeding experience.

Who is SOFFI for?

SOFFI is for babies who are born early or have medical needs when they are born.

Why SOFFI?

In NICU, babies need extra special care to learn to eat.

Feedings

- You and baby may have a period of “protected breast feeding” before bottles are offered
- When your baby has shown they are ready to begin bottle feeding, their team will assist you to learn tips to become safe and successful at bottle feeding your NICU baby

The way your baby learns to eat makes links in their brain. If your baby is fed with the SOFFI method, it will be a good experience

and will help with growing and brain development. Our goal is to teach you how to create a positive feeding experience for your baby.

Signs that your baby is ready to eat:

- Wakes up before or during cares
- Searches for fingers or pacifier to suck on
- Eyes are open and looks around
- Stays awake after cares
- Keeps heart rate and oxygen levels in a safe range
- No changes in the baby’s color during cares

Signs baby is not ready to eat:

- Eyes or mouth closed
- Does not want to suck on pacifier
- Frequent decrease in heart rate or oxygen levels
- Hiccups, yawns, or sneezes
- Looks away with eyes
- “Stop sign” hand

How to do a SOFFI feeding:

- Make sure the baby’s room is quiet, dim, and calm
- Swaddle baby
- Offer pacifier for short periods
- Feed in a side-lying position
- Gently offer the bottle or breast
- Limit feeding to 20-30 minutes

- Avoid stroking, unswaddling, and undressing the baby
- Do not force or twist the bottle while it is in the baby’s mouth

Signs baby is ready to stop feeding:

- Has fallen asleep or stays asleep after burps
- Pushes nipple from mouth
- Turns head away from the nipple
- Stops sucking
- Milk loss from the side of the mouth
- Muscles are very relaxed
- Coughs or chokes
- Wide-eyed or look of panic

Feeding requires patience. Do not feel bad if your baby is not ready to eat or gets tired quickly. This is normal for NICU babies. If your baby is not ready to eat, you can do other things instead:

- This is a perfect time to do skin-to-skin
- Hold and talk to your baby
- Offer them a pacifier (this allows them to practice and gives you bonding time)
- Offer milk drops with a pacifier if interested