



WHAT THE BABY Is Trying to Tell You



Stress cues are communication, not misbehavior.

During feeding, babies use their body and behavior to tell us how they are coping. Recognizing these cues helps us support safe feeding and protect the airway.

I NEED A BREAK

I'm feeling stressed and need a pause.



- Finger splaying
- Eyebrow raise
- Grimacing
- Pulling away
- Wide eyes / staring

I AM LOSING COORDINATION

I'm having a harder time managing the milk.



- Gulping
- Coughing
- Choking
- Milk spilling from mouth
- Frantic or compressed sucking

I AM WORKING TOO HARD

This is taking a lot of energy and I need help.



- Tachypnea (RR > 60)
- Increased work of breathing
- Nasal flaring
- Head bobbing
- Retractions (chest pulling in)

I AM NOT RECOVERING

I can't bounce back and I need more support.



- Desaturation (SpO₂ drop)
- Bradycardia (HR drop)
- Color change (pale, dusky, mottled)
- Long pauses or apnea
- Needing repeated intervention to stabilize

I AM DONE

I'm too tired and can't continue safely.



- Shutting down (no longer responding)
- Falling asleep suddenly
- Loss of tone
- No longer engaging
- Unable to restart safely after breaks

WHAT YOU CAN DO



PAUSE & PACE

Give a break. Lower the flow. Reassess readiness.



ADJUST SUPPORT

Check positioning, pacing, and nipple flow. Help with coordination.



REDUCE WORK

Improve position. Pace more often. Allow time to recover.



STOP & STABILIZE

Stop the feed. Stabilize the baby. Reassess before trying again.



RESPECT THEIR LIMITS

It's okay to stop. Ending the feed protects safety and supports long-term feeding success.

**LISTEN TODAY.
SUPPORT SAFELY.
BUILD TOMORROW.**



A safe feeding today helps your baby succeed tomorrow.

☆ Watch the baby, not the bottle. Your response makes feeding a safe and positive experience. ♥