

# Milk Drops or Tastes in the NICU or PICU

Milk drops or tastes of milk are part of what we call **pre-feeding** in the NICU and PICU. Pre-feeding is what babies do before they are ready to eat by mouth. It gives your baby a chance to practice and get comfortable with the skills they will need for feeding later.

To start this your baby must be at least 29 weeks old (11 weeks before their original due date), not getting medicine that makes them sleepy (sedation), and breathing on their own without a ventilator and breathing tube in their mouth. You can offer milk drops at feeding times if your baby is showing signs they are hungry.

## How to give milk drops or tastes of milk to your baby:

- Place your baby on their side with their hands swaddled or held near their face.
- Offer 1 milk drop to your baby's lips when they are awake.
- If your baby licks the milk from their lips, you can offer them another small drop the same way.
- If your baby opens their mouth and accepts their pacifier with the milk drop, you can try a few more drops.
- You can dip the pacifier in the milk or use a milk straw.
- If you use a milk straw, use a 1 milliliter (mL) syringe filled to 0.5 ml and give 1 drop at a time.



## Stop giving your baby milk drops or tastes of milk if your baby:

- No longer opens their mouth to take it.
- Stops licking, doesn't show interest, or gets tired.
- Goes to sleep or turns away.
- Shows signs of stress, like:
  - Changes in heart rate
  - Drops in oxygen levels or needs more oxygen
  - Pauses in breathing
  - Breathing too fast
- Cries, grimaces, yawns, sneezes, splays their fingers like they are saluting, arches, or stiffens their body.

**Remember:** If your baby doesn't wake up when milk is offered, that's okay. Just try again at the next feeding time when they may be more ready.