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One baby in ten is born premature. Worldwide.



*Premature babies with feeding and swallowing problems have a wide variety of symptoms. Not all signs and symptoms are present in every child.*

The following are signs and symptoms of feeding and swallowing problems :

- ◆ Poor non nutritive (sucking on pacifier) and nutritive (sucking for drinking) sucking
- ◆ arching or stiffening of the body during feeding
- ◆ irritability or lack of alertness during feeding
- ◆ refusing milk
- ◆ long feeding times (e.g., more than 30 minutes)
- ◆ difficulty breast feeding
- ◆ coughing or gagging during feeding
- ◆ excessive drooling or food/liquid coming out of the mouth or nose
- ◆ difficulty coordinating breathing with swallowing
- ◆ frequent spitting up or vomiting
- ◆ recurring pneumonia or respiratory infections

*Feeding tips when feeding a baby in NICU or at home*

The following “STEPS” mnemonic will help you with feeding your child

**S – Swaddle** your baby during feedings. This will give your baby postural control and support while they drink so they can focus on the “workout” of feeding rather than how to stabilize or control his/her body.

**T – Touch your baby.** This is referred to as Kangaroo Care. Make sure you spend as much time as you can in skin-to-skin contact with your baby. This goes for both parents!

**E – Evaluate the flow** of milk from the nipple of your breast or bottle teat. Avoid using high flow nipples and if the natural flow of your breast milk is fast, try pumping a few minutes prior to beginning the feeding.

**P – Pace your baby.** Recognize signs of stress. Be sure you give your baby the breaks he/she needs to breathe.

**S – Position your baby in an elevated sidelying position.** This feeding position will decrease breathing effort, improve head and trunk alignment and allow for the liquid to collect in the cheek prior to the swallow.

