

## Nursing strike

A nursing “strike” is when your baby has been breastfeeding well for months, and then suddenly begins to refuse the breast. A nursing strike can mean that your baby is trying to let you know that something is wrong. This does not usually mean that the baby is ready to wean. Not all babies will react the same to the different situations that can cause a nursing strike. Some babies will continue to breastfeed without a problem. Others may just become fussy at the breast, and others will refuse the breast entirely. Some of the major causes of a nursing strike include:

- Mouth pain from teething, a [fungal infection](#) like thrush, or a cold sore
- An ear infection, which causes pain while sucking
- Pain from a certain breastfeeding position, either from an injury on the baby’s body or from soreness from an immunization
- Being upset about a long separation from the mother or a major change in routine
- Being distracted while breastfeeding — becoming interested in other things around him or her
- A cold or stuffy nose that makes breathing while breastfeeding difficult
- Reduced milk supply from supplementing with bottles or overuse of a pacifier
- Responding to the mother’s strong reaction if the baby has bitten her
- Being upset about hearing arguing or people talking in a harsh voice while breastfeeding
- Reacting to stress, overstimulation, or having been repeatedly put off when wanting to breastfeed

If your baby is on a nursing strike, it is normal to feel frustrated and upset, especially if your baby is unhappy. It is important not to feel guilty or think that you have done something wrong. Keep in mind that your breasts may become uncomfortable as the milk builds up.

### What you can do

1. Try to express your milk on the same schedule as the baby used to breastfeed to avoid [engorgement](#) and [plugged ducts](#).
2. Try another feeding method temporarily to give your baby your milk, such as a cup, dropper, or spoon.
3. Keep track of your baby’s wet diapers and dirty diapers to make sure he or she is getting enough milk.
4. Keep offering your breast to the baby. If the baby is frustrated, stop and try again later. You can also try when the baby is sleeping or very sleepy.
5. Try various [breastfeeding positions](#), with your bare skin next to your baby’s bare skin.
6. Focus on the baby with all of your attention and comfort him or her with extra touching and cuddling.
7. Try breastfeeding while rocking and in a quiet room free of distractions.