

Regression, growth spurt or nursing strike?

The 3am guide

At 3am everything looks the same. Your baby is crying, not sleeping, wanting to nurse — or refusing completely. This guide helps you figure out what's going on without doom-scrolling Google.

Print this guide. Keep it close.
You don't need to memorize it — just know where it is.

This guide is informational and based on personal experience.
It does not replace professional medical advice.

What's going on with my baby?

Sleep regression

Your baby's brain is going through a developmental change so big it reorganizes their sleep patterns. You didn't do anything wrong — it's growth.

- Was sleeping well and suddenly stopped
- Shorter naps or no naps at all
- Waking up more often at night
- No fever or illness
- Age matches: 4m, 8-9m, 12m, 18m or 2 years

Typical duration: 2-6 weeks

Growth spurt

Your baby is physically growing and needs more fuel. They're asking for more food because their body needs it — not because something is wrong.

- Wants to eat MORE than usual
- Calms down after eating
- More irritable but sleep isn't destroyed
- Lasts a short time: 2-7 days
- Common ages: 3w, 6w, 3m, 6m, 9m, 12m

Typical duration: 2-7 days

Nursing Strike

There's a disconnect between what your baby needs and what your body is producing. The supply and demand system is temporarily off balance.

- Frustration specifically at the breast
- Latches, pulls off, cries, latches again
- May refuse the breast completely
- Your supply feels lower than usual
- Frustration is during the feed, not before/after

Typical duration: 2-5 days

Quick comparison

	Regression	Growth spurt	Nursing strike
Main sign	Won't sleep	Wants more food	Frustration at the breast
When	4m, 8-9m, 12m, 18m, 2y	3w, 6w, 3m, 6m, 9m, 12m	Anytime
Duration	2-6 weeks	2-7 days	2-5 days
Calms with feeding	Sometimes	Yes ✓	Not always
Breastfeeding only	No	No	Yes ✓
Can overlap?	Yes ✓	Yes ✓	Yes

- Can two happen at the same time?

Yes. A growth spurt can trigger a nursing strike. A sleep regression can overlap with a growth spurt. When that happens: surviving counts as a strategy.

What can I do?

If it's a sleep regression

- Adjust your expectations temporarily
- Keep the routine — consistency helps more than it seems
- Ask for help: night shifts, someone to take baby in the morning
- Don't start habits you don't want to keep forever

If it's a growth spurt

- If breastfeeding: offer more often. Your body will adjust.
- If formula feeding: check the amount guides for their age
- It's short. Really.

If it's a nursing strike

- Offer the breast frequently, even if baby refuses at first
- Pump if baby refuses completely — to keep supply active
- Reduce stress as much as you can
- If it lasts more than a week or baby isn't gaining weight: find a lactation consultant

The question that matters
at 3am

Is my baby eating, wetting diapers and
gaining weight?

If yes — you're in hard territory, but you're
okay.

If no — call the doctor. Not because
everything is wrong,
but because you deserve real answers.

You're not failing. You're learning as you go — like all of us.

This guide is yours. Print it, share it,
keep it on your phone for 3am.

If it helped you, pass it on to another mom who needs it.
Because no one should be googling alone at 3am.

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