Waking a Sleepy Breastfeeding Baby

Babies are often sleepy during the first week or so. They may not awaken often enough to feed: remember newborns need to eat 8-12 times per 24 hours. Or once the feeding has begun, they may fall asleep again. Here are a few suggestions for waking your baby. Some work better on certain babies than others. When one quits working try another.

Hold baby skin-to-skin for 15-30 minutes

Undress the baby to his diaper to cool him off slightly

Rub and massage the baby in various places
    Top of the head
    Bottom of the feet
    Up and down the spine
    Across the belly
    Up and down the arm
    The spot right above the belly button

Change the position of the baby, from cradle hold to football hold and back again

Change the baby's diaper

Do "baby sit-ups". Rock the baby from a sitting to lying position and back again. Rock gently back and forth until the baby's eyes open. *Do not* "jack-knife" the baby (force him forward)

Start to pull the nipple from the baby's mouth (Make sure that this does not result in the baby sucking on just the tip of the nipple. If it does break the suction and re-attach the baby to the breast)

Talk to the baby. Babies respond to mom's voice

Try adjusting room lights up for stimulation or down so the baby can comfortably open his eyes

Apply a cool washcloth to the baby's head, stomach or back.   (Do not let the baby become chilled. Premature infants become chilled more easily than term infants.)

If your baby is unarousable after a reasonable amount of time and the use of several techniques, contact your physician.