



Crisis Feeding Support

Why Regulation Is a Prerequisite for Feeding

Infants cannot coordinate suck-swallow-breathe when dysregulated.

In emergencies, three things commonly disrupt feeding:

- Unpredictability (changes in sleep/feeding routines)
- Sensory overload (noise, lights, crowds)
- Caregiver stress (infants mirror caregiver physiology)

When babies are dysregulated, you may see: shallow latch, frequent pulling off, early fatigue, coughing/sputtering, or late-cue crying.

Step 1 is not to fix the latch — it is to restore regulation.

How Baby Carrying Helps Babies Feed

Baby carrying supports the infant's physiologic stability in five ways:

- Upright + airway-safe alignment → easier breathing, more coordinated feeding
- External trunk support → frees energy for oral-motor skills
- Reduced stress arousal → helps baby reach the quiet-alert state needed for feeding
- Close proximity → easier to catch early hunger cues and avoid crying
- Neutral spine → protects airway, reduces reflux, and supports safe feeding

Baby carrying is not “hands-free convenience”; it restores feeding conditions in unstable environments.

Quick Steps Caregivers Can Use in Emergencies

STEP 1 — Reconnect + Regulate Before Feeding

- Hold baby skin-to-skin
- Use carrier or close contact with rhythmic movement (swaying, walking)
- Keep chin off chest, airway visible

Wait for baby to return to the quiet-alert state

STEP 2 — Feed in Upright, Supported Positions

- For breast/chest/bottle feeding:
- Baby's head above heart
- Spine neutral, not curled
- Shoulders + trunk supported
- Airway visible throughout

STEP 3 — Use T.I.C.K.S. for Airway Safety in Carriers

- Tight enough to support
- In view at all times
- Close enough to kiss
- Keep chin off chest
- Supported back

Use these same principles during and after feeds.

STEP 4 — Feed Early and Often

In emergencies, babies may feed:

- Shorter + more frequently
- In small bursts
- With more need for upright recovery afterward
- Keep baby close to avoid missed cues.

STEP 5 — Protect the Caregiver

- A regulated caregiver → a more regulated infant.
- Use carrier to reduce body strain
- Stay hydrated when possible
- Slow, intentional breathing helps co-regulate

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About Us

Thank you for reading this guide. If you'd like to learn more about us and explore our Feeding in Motion project, you can click the link below.



I'm Meagan Pa, DNP/WHNP-S, IBCLC with previous experience as a doula, childbirth educator, infant massage instructor, and La Leche League leader.

I'm Cassidy Eisenfeld, a certified babywearing educator and mom of four. I teach parents how to babywear and breastfeed safely and comfortably so they can stay connected, explore with their little ones, and enjoy the many benefits of keeping babies close.



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