

Information for breastfeeding families

Increasing Your Breastmilk Supply



During the first few days and weeks, frequent stimulation of the breasts by breastfeeding or by using a breast pump is essential to establish an abundant breastmilk supply. If you find your milk supply is low, try the following recommendations.

More breast stimulation

- Breastfeed more often, at least 8 or more times per 24 hours
- Discontinue the use of a pacifier
- Try to get in “one more feeding” before you go to sleep, even if you have to wake the baby
- Offer both breasts at each feeding
- Empty your breasts well by massaging while the baby is feeding
- Assure the baby is completely emptying your breasts at each feeding.

Use a breast pump

- Use a hospital grade breast pump with a double kit
- Pump after feedings or between feedings
- Apply warmth to your breasts and massage before beginning to pump
- Try “power pumping.” Pump for 15 minutes every hour for a day; or try pumping 10 minutes, resting 10 minutes, pumping 10 minutes and so on, for an hour

Mother care

- Reduce stress and activity. Get help
- Increase fluid intake
- Eat nutritious meals; continue to take prenatal vitamins
- Back rubs stimulate nerves that serve the breasts (central part of the spine)
- Increase skin-to-skin holding time with your baby; relax together
- Take a warm, bath, read, meditate, and empty your mind of tasks that need to be done

Avoid these things that are known to reduce breastmilk supply

- Smoking
- Birth control pills and injections
- Decongestants, antihistamines
- Severe weight loss diets
- Mints, parsley, sage (excessive amounts)

Keep records

- It is important to keep a daily log with the 24 hour pumping output totals - this amount is more important than the pumped amount at each session. This will help you see your progress over the days.
- Keep in touch with your healthcare provider to monitor your progress and modify your care as necessary.

Retained placenta

- If you are not seeing improvement and you are still having vaginal bleeding after 2 weeks, discuss the possibility of retained placental fragments with your healthcare provider. Small bits of the placenta can secrete enough hormones to prevent the milk from coming in.

Low thyroid

- Have your healthcare provider check your thyroid levels. Low thyroid can affect milk supply.

If supplementation is recommended

- Determine the amount needed with your healthcare provider
- Pump after the feeding
- Offer the supplement in a way that won't interfere with breastfeeding such as a tube or syringe at the breast or a cup or spoon
- Wean your baby off the supplements gradually.

Other resources

- <http://www.lowmilksupply.org/>