

Increasing Your Breastmilk Supply

Not getting off to an optimal start with breastfeeding is the most common reason for low milk supply. Frequent stimulation of the breasts, by breastfeeding or by pumping, during the first few days, and weeks, are essential to establish an abundant breastmilk supply.

If you are consistent about following these recommendations you will likely see an improvement within a few days. Although it may take a month or more to bring your supply up to meet your baby's needs, you will see steady, gradual improvement. You will be glad that you put the time and effort into breastfeeding, and so will your baby!!

Breastfeed more often, at least 8-10 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

"Burp & Switch", using each breast twice, and using different positions

"Top up feeds" Give a short feeding in 10-20 minutes if baby seems hungry

Assure good positioning and latch-on for maximum breast stimulation

Hold your baby at breast height, rolled facing you, nose to nipple, head titled back slightly

Stroke your nipple down from nose to chin to encourage a wide open mouth

Wait for your baby to open his mouth WIDE and place your baby's lower lip on the outer edge of your areola. Fold the rest of the nipple into his mouth, aiming at the roof of his mouth.

Look for a WIDE latch-on (at least 140° open)

Listen for swallowing, on swallow per 1-3 sucks

Pump using a hospital grade breast pump with a double kit

Pump after feedings or between feedings

Rest 10-15 minutes prior to pumping, eat and drink something

Apply warmth to your breasts and massage before beginning to pump

Some mothers find "power pumping" works. 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.

Condition your let-down reflex

Play relaxing music

Imagine your baby, look at pictures of your baby, smell baby clothing or baby powder

Always pump in the same quiet, relaxed place, set up a routine

Do slow, deep, relaxed breathing, relax your shoulders

Mother care

Reduce stress and activity

Increase fluid intake

Eat nutrition meals, continue to take prenatal vitamins

Back rubs stimulate nerves that serve the breasts (central part of the spine)

Increase skin-to-skin contact with your baby, relax together

Take a warm, bath, read, meditate, and empty your mind of tasks that need to be done

Herbs, foods and medications

Eat a bowl of cooked oatmeal daily

Brewer's yeast 3 T daily, increase by ½ teaspoon daily until results are seen (or equivalent in capsules) Fenugreek preparations help many women increase supply. Doses of 3-5 capsules (580-610 mg), three times per day are commonly recommended. Discuss this with your physician. *Avoid fenugreek if you are diabetic, hypoglycemic, asthmatic or allergic to peanuts or other legumes.* Fenugreek is available at most vitamin shops or health food stores. Taken as directed, it may cause a faint maple body odor. That is to be expected and means that the herb is doing it's job. If you would like to read more about fenugreek, go to http://www.breastfeeding.com/all_about/all_about_fenugreek.html

Blessed thistle or other herbs or beverages such as Mother's Milk Tea taken as directed on package. A reliable source of herbs and herbal blends is MotherLove Herbals.

Prescription medications sometimes help increase milk supply. Metaclopramide (Reglan) has been used with limited success. Reglan is associated with tardive dyskinesia and is probably not advisable. Domperidone has been used with more success but is not available in the United States. Discuss the use of prescription medications with your MD).

Keep records

It is important to keep a daily log with the number pumping sessions, amount obtained, amount you are having to supplement your baby and 24 hour 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 health care provider so she can monitor your progress and modify your advice is necessary.

Retained placenta

If you are not seeing progress in increasing your breastmilk supply and you are still having bleeding after 2 weeks, consider discussing the possibility of retained placental fragments with your MD. Small bits of the placenta can secrete enough hormones to prevent a full supply or even prevent the milk from coming in.

Low thyroid

Have your physician check your thyroid levels. Low thyroid can affect milk supply. If you have been taking thyroid, have your levels rechecked after delivery. You may need your thyroid medication adjusted.

Avoid these things that are known to reduce breastmilk supply:

Smoking

Caffeine

Birth control pills (including shots)

Decongestants, antihistamines

Severe weight loss diets



Sage and jasmine tea, parsley, peppermint candies (Altoids, Starlight mints, etc),

If your baby requires supplementation until your supply increases use a small feeding cup, a feeding tube at the breast or proper use of a bottle as directed by your health care provider.

Paced Bottle Feeding

Use Medela or Dr.Brown's nipple with a medium base for a newborn. Older babies do well with a NUK or a Avent nipple or other nipple with a wide base. Select a nipple with a small hole, or only one hole, usually called "slow flow" or "newborn". Place it deeply in your baby's mouth so his gums compress the wide part of the base of the nipple. Hold the baby "cheek to breast" while nearly vertical and keep the bottle nearly horizontal so the flow of milk is slower. (If the bottle is held vertically, gravity helps the milk flow very fast).



Web sites of interest:

<http://www.kellymom.com/bf/supply/low-supply.html>

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

Please be aware that the information provided is intended solely for general educational and informational purposes only. It is neither intended nor implied to be a substitute for professional medical advice. Always seek the advice of your physician for any questions you may have regarding your or your infant's medical condition. Never disregard professional medical advice or delay in seeking it because of something you have received in this information.

