

# Helpful Information for Breastfeeding Moms

## **Breastfeeding hormones:**

Prolactin causes your alveoli to take nutrients from your blood and turn them into breast milk. Oxytocin causes the cells around the alveoli to contract and release the milk down the milk ducts to the nipple. A release of Oxytocin tells the Pituitary Gland to release more Prolactin, creating a feedback loop that should support itself under ideal conditions.

## **Diet:**

Many women believe that if they eat certain foods, then their babies will be fussy (i.e. chocolate, spicy food or broccoli). Studies actually show this isn't true for most foods. Milk seems to be the exception. If you feel that your baby is exceptionally fussy, cut milk out of your diet and see if it improves.

Most babies go through developmental changes, and it puts demands on their system and they get fussy. Because of temperament, some babies are much fussier than others. Over-stimulating the baby also can make them fussy. Most foods you eat, however, do not. So, eat what you like.

A lactating woman should eat 500 calories more than she would under a non-pregnant diet. If she tries to cut back or diet, the milk supply may be diminished. Make sure to drink plenty of fluids, and consume adequate protein, since milk is mostly protein, fat and fluids.

## **Avoid:**

Smoking decreases milk production by decreasing prolactin and oxytocin. Nicotine can pass through the milk contributing to an irritable baby. Smoking around a new born also increases the chance of SIDS.

Drinking alcohol also diminishes breast milk supply because it decreases oxytocin. Alcohol passes through the milk and is harmful to the newborn's immature liver. If you need to drink, wait at least 2-3 hours after drinking ONE "drink" before you feed your baby. Remember, one alcoholic drink is equal to one ounce of liquor, four ounces of wine, or 12 ounces of beer. Beer does NOT increase milk supply.

Antihistamines temporarily decrease supply while it is in your system. If you use antihistamines sparingly, your milk supply will be fine.

## **Supply “helps” (galactagogues):**

*Fenugreek* - Nearly all mothers in a recent study reported an increase in their milk supply within 24 to 72 hours after taking this herb. Many women notice a maple syrup-like odor to their urine and sweat. Some women develop diarrhea while one it.

- **Fennel** - assists with triggering the letdown reflex because it contains oxytocin, but has a faint licorice flavor.
- **Blessed Thistle** - has natural oxytocin and can be helpful with let-down.
  - *Fenugreek, Fennel and Blessed Thistle should not be used in PREGNANCY because they may cause bleeding and pregnancy loss.*
- **Alfalfa** - recommended by some to increase milk production. It should not be used if you are on blood thinners or used in large quantities.
- **Red Raspberry** - does not increase supply, but is reported to enrich the milk with vitamins.
- **Brewer's yeast** - is NOT effective for increasing milk supply. Brewer's yeast is a rich source of B vitamins, protein, and essential amino acids.
- **Marshmallow** - reported to increase the effectiveness of all the other galactagogues, but does very little by itself. There are no studies to support this.

## **Stress:**

High stress levels decrease oxytocin levels. Oxytocin is needed to initiate milk production and assists with the let-down reflex. Don't get frustrated with nursing; frustration is counter-productive. Breastfeed your baby in a quiet room with relaxing music. Try to manage environmental stressors such as work, other children and home responsibilities.

## **Other helpful links:**

[http://www.kellymom.com/herbal/milksupply/herbal-rem\\_a.html#byeast](http://www.kellymom.com/herbal/milksupply/herbal-rem_a.html#byeast)

[http://www.babycenter.com/404\\_can-the-herb-fenugreek-increase-a-moms-milk-supply\\_8880.bc](http://www.babycenter.com/404_can-the-herb-fenugreek-increase-a-moms-milk-supply_8880.bc)

<http://www.drugs.com/cg/effects-of-smoking-alcohol-and-medicines-on-breastfeeding.html>

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