

Breastfeeding: *Increasing Milk Production*

This handout gives information and tips to help increase your body's production of breast milk.

As you read, keep in mind that many women have problems with low milk supply from time to time. So try not to get discouraged. There are many things you can do to boost your milk production, and the extra effort you make today will make a big difference to your baby.

Why am I not producing enough milk?

There are several possible reasons for a low milk supply. The most common is lack of demand (not nursing or not pumping often enough or long enough). Poor nutrition, fatigue, and stress can also play a role. The tips on the back of this handout can help with all of these.

Another possible cause of low milk supply is medications and drugs. **Talk to a lactation consultant (breastfeeding expert) about any medications, herbs, supplements, or other substances you may be taking. You may also call the Pregnancy Helpline, 1-800-822-BABY (2229).**

Some substances, alone or in combination, can lower your milk production. In particular:

- **Talk to your doctor about your birth control.** Some birth control with estrogen can lower breast milk production. You may need to switch to a different birth control for a time.
- **Don't take any special teas, vitamins, or supplements for breastfeeding without first talking to your lactation consultant.** Some of these don't work, and some actually decrease breast milk production in some people.
- **Don't smoke.** For help quitting, talk to your doctor or call this phone number for help: 1-888-567-8788. Keep trying to quit until you succeed. It's worth it!



Breastfeed and pump

To increase your milk, you need to **empty your breasts often and completely**. For a time, you may need to combine breastfeeding and pumping, or — if your baby isn't nursing — pump more often.

Use the right breast pump

To increase milk production, you'll need to use a hospital-grade pump. This type of pump has appropriate suction settings, and can pump both breasts at the same time. *Note: If you already have an electric pump, ask your lactation consultant whether you can use your pump.*

Your lactation consultant can recommend a pump to buy or rent. When you get the pump and the pump kit, have your lactation consultant check the fit of your breasts to the flanges. (The flanges are the plastic funnels. They come in the pump kit with the tubing that attaches to the pump.)

If you're worried about the cost of a pump, consider:

- Most insurance companies will cover either the rental cost for a hospital-grade pump or the purchase cost of a personal double electric pump. If you're on Medicaid and signed up with WIC (Women, Infants and Children — a government nutrition program), you can get a pump from your local WIC office.
- The cost of buying or renting a good pump is less than the cost of formula.

Tips for breastfeeding and pumping to increase milk production

If your baby is nursing...

- Breastfeed as often as your baby will take the breast (try for every 2 hours — or more often — during the day).
- Pump both breasts after breastfeeding.
- Don't go longer than a 5-hour stretch at night without breastfeeding or pumping.

About pumping...

- Pump both breasts at the same time.
- Pump or breastfeed after skin-to-skin time with your baby. (Skin-to-skin holding — also called “kangaroo care” — means holding your baby closely so that your bare chests are touching.)
- Pump and massage your breasts 8 to 10 times a day, for 15 to 30 minutes a session. Here's how:
 - Pump until the milk is no longer squirting out.
 - Remove the flange from your breast and massage around your breast in a circle, moving gradually inward toward the nipple.
 - Pump again. When the milk has stopped dripping, pump for 2 more minutes before stopping.
- When pumping, turn up the suction pressure after letdown (after the milk starts spraying out). This will help empty your breast. But don't turn it up so much that it's painful.
- Before and during pumping, place a heating pad, warm wet cloth, or warm “bed buddy” on your shoulder, neck, or chest. (You can make a bed buddy by filling a tube sock or fabric bag with beans or rice. Warm it in the microwave.)
- Try power pumping every day to help boost your milk-making hormones. To power pump: pump 10 minutes, rest 10 minutes, pump 10 minutes, rest 10 minutes, etc. — for one hour.



Watch what you eat and drink

Good habits help make good breast milk.

Adopt these habits:

- *Sit down* and eat at least 3 balanced meals and 2 healthy protein snacks every day.
- Every day, drink 6 to 8 full glasses of water or juice. Limit the caffeine.
- Take a daily multivitamin with iron.

Sleep and rest

Fatigue can hurt your milk production. Try these tips to help get enough sleep and rest:

- Go to bed early, and take naps during the day. Unplug the phone!
- Ask for help with daily tasks. At least until your milk supply is adequate, stop working so hard.
- Set aside a weekend for a mini-vacation. Do nothing but eat and relax (and nurse and pump). Focus on increasing your milk supply.

Relax

Stress won't help your body make milk. Try to relax:

- Take a warm bath or shower.
- Ask for a back rub while you're pumping.
- Escape a little. Watch a video or read a book. Get a massage, manicure, or pedicure.
- Put on some soothing music, close your eyes, and think positive thoughts. Think of everything you're giving your baby by breastfeeding — and be kind to yourself.