

Breast-feeding: Tips to Increase Your Milk Supply

Listed below are some of the signs that a breast-fed baby is being well nourished:

1. Your baby nurses at least 8 to 12 times in 24 hours, or every 2 to 3 hours. Your baby may be fussy once or twice a day. At these times, he or she wants to nurse **often** for several hours before seeming full. This is called cluster feeding.
2. Your baby wets at least 6 cloth or 5 disposable diapers and has at least 1 bowel movement in 24 hours. This occurs by 1 week of age.
3. You can hear your baby swallow milk while nursing or you can feel your baby swallow when lightly touching his or her throat.
4. Your breasts seem softer after nursing.
5. Your baby gains 4 to 7 ounces a week after the first week. There is no need to weigh your baby at home—your baby's doctor will do this for you. You may notice that your baby has outgrown his or her clothing.

There are some factors which can cause your milk supply to decrease:

1. Your baby feeds fewer than 8 to 12 times in 24 hours. Milk production is affected by how well the breast is drained.
2. Your baby has a very weak suck, or has an improper latch.
3. Giving bottles of formula or water after nursing. Most babies will suck on a bottle after nursing. This just means they need to suck. It does not mean they are still hungry. Babies cry or fuss for many reasons, such as being tired, bored, wet, hot, or cold.
4. Giving solid foods too early and/or before you breast feed. Most babies do not need solid foods for the first 6 months if they are breast feeding 8 to 12 times a day.
5. Smoking can cause a decreased milk supply and interfere with the letdown reflex. Here are some things you should do:
 - Try to quit or cut down.
 - Smoke after nursing, not before.
 - Don't smoke in the same room with your baby.

6. Beginning birth control pills too soon can decrease your milk supply. Wait at least 6 weeks before taking birth control pills, and then use **ONLY** the minipill (Progestin). If you still notice a decrease in your milk supply, talk to your doctor about other birth control options. Other medications may also affect milk supply. Check with your doctor.
7. Mothers who are exhausted may notice a decrease in milk supply. To keep yourself from getting too tired:
 - Sleep or relax when your baby sleeps.
 - Eat a balanced diet that includes high-protein foods.
 - Drink to thirst and so that your urine is pale yellow in color. Both under and excessive over hydration can decrease milk supply.
 - Take an iron supplement if your health care provider says you are anemic.
 - Talk with your doctor or nurse midwife about the need for vitamin supplements.
 - Accept help when it is offered.
8. Use nipple shields and pacifiers with caution.
9. A breast flange that is too small or too large in size can hurt your milk supply.
10. Pregnancy.
11. Breast reduction surgery MAY reduce milk supply.

If you notice your milk supply is low, you can also increase it by:

1. Nursing your baby often. Nurse *every 2 hours* during the day and *every 3 to 4 hours* at night (at least 8 to 12 times in 24 hours). If your baby will not nurse, use a good quality double electric breast pump to increase milk production. Pumping after breastfeeds signals your body to produce more milk.
2. Nurse your baby at least 15 minutes at each breast. Do not limit nursing time. If your baby falls asleep after one breast, wake him or her and offer the second breast. (A few babies may benefit from nursing at one breast per feeding to increase the fat content of a feeding.)

Switch nursing - Switching breasts several times during a feeding has been shown to increase milk transfer.
3. Gently massage breast before and during feedings.
4. Use relaxation techniques to reduce stress and promote the flow of breast milk.
5. Provide skin to skin time with your baby for about 20 minutes after feeds. This "Kangaroo care" has been shown to increase milk supply (see PI Sheet 223 - Kangaroo Care).
6. Be sure baby is positioned and latched correctly.
7. Offer both breasts at each feeding.

8. Try breast compression during the feeding to help drain the breast.
9. Pump immediately after breast feeding during the day. Rest at night. Some mothers find that they get more milk if they pump for 5 minutes, rest for 5 minutes, pump for another 10 minutes.
10. Talk to your doctor about using metoclopramide (Reglan) or the herb fenugreek .



If you have any questions or concerns, or are having any problems with breast feeding, call:

**University MacDonald
Lactation Center**

East: 216-595-5354

West: 440-250-2035

References:

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Professional," 6th edition, Mosby Inc., 2005

Riordan, Jan & Wambach, Karen
"Breastfeeding and Human Lactation,"
4th edition, Jones & Bartlett, 2010