



Patient Information

Building Your Milk Supply

Many mothers worry that their milk supply is not enough for their baby. You can tell if your baby is getting enough milk by the number of wet and soiled diapers, your baby’s weight gain patterns, and overall signs of health. Most mothers produce more than enough milk for their baby to thrive.

Here is a chart to help you sort through some of the common reasons mothers think that they do not have enough milk for their baby.

If you notice....	Remember that....
Your baby wants to breastfeed all the time.	Your baby’s stomach is small and that is why your baby needs to feed often.
Your baby seems hungrier than usual.	Babies have many growth spurts and breastfeed more often to satisfy their hunger and build mother’s milk supply.
Your baby is fussy between feedings.	There are many reasons for fussiness. Your baby might be gassy, feel too warm or cold, need a diaper change, or wish to be held.
Your baby wants to suck even though you just breastfed.	Many babies enjoy sucking and like to suck to comfort themselves.
Your breasts don’t leak milk or feel as full as they did when you first started to produce milk.	Many mothers do not leak milk. It is normal for your breasts to feel softer once your milk supply adjusts to suit your baby’s needs.
You never feel a letdown (milk ejection) or your letdowns do not feel as strong as they once felt.	Many mothers do not feel the letdown of their milk. The letdown reflex is unrelated to milk supply.
You are able to hand express or pump only small amounts of milk or no milk at all.	The amount of milk that you are able to hand express/pump from your breast is not equal to the amount of milk your baby gets when breastfeeding. Most babies know how to best remove milk from your breast.

Please refer to the handout “How to Be Sure That Your Baby Is Getting Enough” for more information.

If you are unsure about your milk supply being able to meet your baby’s needs, contact a Lactation Consultant or health care provider who is skilled with helping breastfeeding mothers.

How to Build Your Milk Supply

Breastfeed Frequently

- Your baby needs to feed 8 or more times in 24 hours. Avoid long stretches between feeds. Remember that babies need to feed during the night.
- Keep your baby close so that you can watch for your baby's feeding cues. Early feeding cues to watch for include eyelid movement, moving the arms and legs, making sucking motions, raising the hands to the mouth, and rooting (turns head and looks for something to suck). Crying is a late feeding cue. Breastfeed your baby when you notice the early feeding cues.
- **Even if your baby shows few feeding cues it is important to feed your baby at least every 3 hours. This means you need to wake your baby to feed.**
- Do not give a baby under 6 months of age any food or drink other than breastmilk unless medically indicated.
- Avoid the use of a pacifier. When your baby is fussy, offer the breast. If that doesn't help, try other ways to comfort your baby.

Breastfeed Effectively

- Be sure that your baby spends enough time at the breast and is swallowing milk. When milk is removed thoroughly from the breast your body will make more milk.
- Make sure your baby is positioned and latched correctly. A shallow latch can lessen your milk supply. Have a Lactation Consultant or health care provider who has experience helping breastfeeding mothers watch you position and latch your baby.
- Use switch nursing when you feed your baby.
Switch Nursing: Breastfeed your baby on the first breast until swallowing slows or stops. Move your baby to the second breast and breastfeed until swallowing slows or stops. Return your baby to the first breast and then once again to the second breast.
- Breast massage and compression while your baby feeds helps your baby get more milk.

Try to Remove as Much Milk from the Breast as Possible

- Hand express or pump your milk after breastfeeding as often as you can.
- Using a hospital grade electric breast pump will stimulate your breasts and can help increase your milk supply. Pump both breasts at the same time using a double pumping kit.

Take Care of Yourself

- Eat a well balanced diet according to *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating*. Be sure to get the calories and nutrition that your body needs.
- Drink enough fluids to keep you from feeling thirsty and to keep your urine pale yellow. Many mothers try to drink every time they breastfeed.
- Talk with your health care provider about any medications or herbal products that you are using. Some products lower milk supply, often another choice can be made. For more information: www.motherisk.org
- Make sure you get rest. Nap when your baby sleeps. Studies show that mothers get more sleep when the baby is sleeping in the same room (room sharing).
- Limit visitors. Ask relatives and friends to help with chores such as meals, laundry or errands so you can focus on yourself and your baby.

Other Factors that May Lower Milk Supply

- Caffeine-containing foods such as coffee, tea, and cola
- Large amounts of some herbs such as sage, parsley, oregano, thyme and peppermint
- Smoking
- Drinking alcohol
- Some contraceptives
- Some over the counter medications such as cold and flu remedies, allergy medication.
- Using a nipple shield
- Using a pacifier
- Giving supplements to your baby – this includes water, formula, early introduction of solids
- Following a rigid feeding schedule, rather than feeding in response to your baby's feeding cues
- Rarely a mother will have a medical condition that affects milk supply

Talk to a Lactation Consultant or health care provider who has experience helping breastfeeding mothers if these suggestions do not help you build your milk supply.

References:

- 1) Mannel, R, Martens, P, and Walker, M. (2013). Core Curriculum for Lactation Consultant Practice. 3rd ed. Burlington, MA.: Jones Bartlett Learning, 818 -820.
- 2) Mohrbacher, N. (2010). Breastfeeding Answers Made Simple: A Guide for Helping Mothers. Amarillo, Texas: Hale Publishing. 390-401, 413-419.
- 3) Wambach, K., & Riordan, J. (2016). Breastfeeding and Human Lactation. 5th ed. Boston, MA: Jones and Bartlett Publishers, pp. 287-291.
- 4) West, D. and Marasco, L. (2013). The Breastfeeding Mother's Guide to Making More Milk. McGraw Hill.

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