**Increasing Milk Supply**

**How Milk Supply Works:**

During pregnancy the breasts build a milk factory in preparation for feeding your baby. Hormones from the placenta aid this process, and for mothers carrying multiple babies, extra hormones create an even bigger milk factory. Once the baby is born and the placenta comes out, the milk factory opens for business and within two to four days, milk production kicks into high gear. Form that time on, “the factory”- your breasts- determine how much milk to make by how much your baby takes out. That puts your baby in charge of your milk supply!

When a full-term, healthy baby is allowed to nurse as often and as long as he needs, a good milk supply is usually established. Most babies feed 8-12 times a day. If the baby is unable to do the job due to premature birth, separation, illness, or another condition, milk must be removed from your breasts by other means or else the milk factory will begin to shut down. If your baby nurses effectively at the breast, pumping up to 8/12 times each 24 hours will help to ensure a good milk supply. If your baby is not feeding directly at the breast, a good goal for the amount of milk you pump per day is at least 25-30 ounces (750-900ml’s).

Your breasts are always making milk. When your breasts are drained often, they make milk faster. If milk builds up and isn’t removed often or for a while, they make milk more slowly. If your baby decides he wants to eat more than your breasts have stored up at the moment, he will keep nursing and draining your breasts until milk production speeds up to meet his needs. If you are making more than he wants, the leftover milk he leaves inside signals your breast to make less until your supply matches what he needs. How often your baby feeds ultimately is determined not by his age but by your milk storage capacity-the size of the warehouse in your milk factory. The babies whose mothers can store lots of milk may take larger feedings, less often, while the babies of mothers with less storage space get smaller meals and may feed more often.

**How do you know if you’re Milk Supply is Low:**

Baby behaviors like fussing after nursing, frequent feeds, feeding for short or long periods of time, or changes such as softer breasts or less leakage, may or may not indicate a low milk supply. These behaviors are often just part of the normal course of breastfeeding. Whereas in the early weeks the breasts are full and sometimes hard, this is related to additional fluids in the breasts as well as extra milk over and beyond what your baby needs. As the fluid is lost and your breasts settle into milk production that matches your baby’s needs, the breasts will feel softer-even though there is plenty of milk in them and more on the way! Sometimes an increase in frequency of feeding is an indication of an increase in your baby’s need for “mommy

time,” and does not reflect a supply problem. The best way to tell is to look at your baby’s diaper output and weight gain. In the first 6-8 weeks, most babies have at least 5-7 good wet diapers and at least 3-4 stools larger than a US quarter (2.5cm). As they get older, they have fewer but larger bowel movements. From the time their mother’s milk comes in until four to six months of age, the babies should gain around 5-7 ounces (150-210 grams) per week. Weight gain slows down gradually for the rest of the first year. Your baby’s health care provider can tell you if he is continuing to gain appropriately or if there is a cause for concern.

Understanding the cause of a low milk supply will help you figure out the most effective way to increase it. Any time a baby is nursing less than 8 times per day, offering the breast more frequently sends the message that more milk is needed. If a baby is not draining the breast well because of poor latch (s may be the case when nursing is painful), correcting the latch will help the baby do his job better and stimulate production in the process. If the problem is the baby’s suck, getting help and doing some extra pumping in the meantime can help bring your milk supply back up to where it is needed. Certain medications or hormonal birth control may also decrease milk production. More rarely, there can be problems with the mother’s breasts or hormones. If it seems like you and your baby have been doing everything right but milk supply still is low, seek help from a qualified lactation professional who can help you.

**Tips to Make More Milk:**

* Extra nursing’s: extra pumping or pumping after nursing to remove any leftover milk. The more milk is removed, the more milk your breasts will make.
* Use the best pump you can afford. High quality consumer or rental pump.
* Encourage your baby to get all his suckling needs met at the breasts. Avoid pacifiers and unnecessary supplements. If baby has been getting more than 2 to 3 ounces of formula daily, reduce the amount gradually while you build up your milk supply.
* Compress your breast with one hand while nursing or pumping ot get more milk out and stimulate milk production. Rotate your hand and feel for any firm, undrained areas to compress. Hand expression after pumping can help get milk out.
* Get your rest. The milk-making hormone Prolactin rises naturally when you sleep. Nursing while lying down may help you to get the rest you need.
* Eat lactogenic (milk supportive) foods and spices. Historically most cultures have special foods for nursing mothers. While there is not a lot of scientific evidence yet, years of experience suggest that certain foods like barely and oatmeal, or cooking spices such as dill, caraway, coriander, and fennel really can help some mothers: visit <http://www.mobinmotherhood.org/> or kellymom.com
* Drink to thirst. More effective milk removal is not increased by water consumed, it stimulates milk production. As your breasts make more milk however, you may find yourself becoming thirstier and needing more liquids.
* Is a medicinal herbal galactagogue right for you? There are some herbal preparations that have helped many mothers build a supply, including fenugreek. It is important to consult with your doctor before trying any medicinal galactogogue, as some have serious side effects and these are not FDA approved

\*Knowing whether you are making as much milk as your baby needs requires a combination of knowing your baby, trusting your breasts to do their job and trusting your instincts. If something doesn’t seem right, contact a lactation specialist. They can help evaluate whether there is a problem and help you work through it, if there is.

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