



Increasing Milk Supply

Make sure that baby is nursing efficiently. It is important to remove more milk to increase milk production. If milk is not effectively removed from the breast, then mom's milk supply decreases. If positioning and latch are off then baby is probably not transferring milk efficiently. A sleepy baby, use of nipple shields or various health or anatomical problems in baby can also interfere with baby's ability to transfer milk. For a baby who is not nursing efficiently, trying to adequately empty milk from the breast is like trying to empty a swimming pool through a drinking straw - it can take forever. Inefficient milk transfer can lead to baby not getting enough milk or needing to nurse almost constantly to get enough milk. If baby is not transferring milk well, then it is important for mom to express milk after and/or between nursings to maintain milk supply while the breastfeeding problems are being addressed with a Lactation Consultant.

Nurse frequently, and for as long as your baby is actively nursing. Remember - you want to remove more milk from the breasts and do this frequently. If baby is having weight gain problems, aim to nurse at least every 1.5-2 hours during the day and at least every 3 hours at night.

Take a nursing vacation. Take baby to bed with you for 2-3 days, and do nothing but nurse (frequently!) and rest (well, you can eat too!).

Offer both sides at each feeding. Let baby finish the first side, then offer the second side.

Switch nurse. Switch sides 3 or more times during each feeding, every time that baby falls asleep, switches to comfort sucking, or loses interest. Use each side at least twice per feeding. Use breast compression to keep baby feeding longer. For good instructions on how to do this, see Dr. Jack Newman's website, www.nbc.ca. This can be particularly helpful for sleepy or distractible babies.

Avoid pacifiers and bottles. All of baby's sucking needs should be met at the breast (see above). If a temporary supplement is medically required, it can be given with a nursing supplementer or by spoon, cup or dropper.

Give baby only breastmilk. Avoid all solids, water, and formula if baby is younger than six months, and consider decreasing solids if baby is older. If you are using more than a few ounces of formula per day, wean from the supplements gradually to challenge your breasts to produce more milk.

Take care of mom. Rest. Sleep when baby sleeps. Relax. Drink liquids to thirst (don't force liquids - drinking extra water does not increase supply), and eat a reasonably well-balanced diet.

Consider pumping. Adding pumping sessions after or between nursing sessions can be very helpful - pumping is very important when baby is not nursing efficiently or frequently enough. Your aim in pumping is to remove more milk from the breasts and/or to increase frequency of breast emptying. When pumping to increase milk supply, to ensure that the pump removes an optimum amount of milk from the breast, keep pumping for 2-5 minutes after the last drops of milk. However, adding even a short pumping session (increasing frequency but perhaps not removing milk thoroughly) is helpful.

Consider a galactagogue, a substance (herb, prescription medication, etc.) that increases milk supply. An example is fenugreek, a safe herb that can increase milk production. For more information please see the Handout: Fenugreek: Herbal Support for Low-Milk Supply.

