

# Breastfeeding: Increasing milk production

It is common for nursing women to experience low milk supply from time to time. There are many things you can do to boost your milk production, and your extra effort can make a big difference to your baby.

## Why do I have a low milk supply?

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

Medicines and drugs may also cause a low milk supply. **Talk to a lactation consultant (breastfeeding expert) about any medicines, herbs, supplements, or other substances you are taking. You may also call the Pregnancy Helpline, 1-866-626-6847.** 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 use 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 women.
- **Don't smoke.** For help quitting, talk to your doctor or call this phone number: 1-888-567-8788. Additional information and resources on smoking are available in Intermountain's booklet: **Living and Learning Together: A Guide to Breastfeeding.** Keep trying to quit until you succeed. It's worth it!



## The Basics: Breastfeeding and pumping

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

### Use the right breast pump

Using a hospital grade pump is important for increasing your milk supply. This type of pump has appropriate suction settings and can pump both breasts at the same time. Ask your lactation consultant to recommend a pump to buy or rent. **If you already have your own electric pump, ask your lactation consultant whether you can use your pump.**

When you get your pump and pump kit, have your lactation consultant check the fit of your nipples to the flanges [FLANJ-ez]. (The plastic funnels in the pump kit with the tubing.)

- Most insurances will cover the purchase cost of a double electric pump
- Many insurances will cover cost of a rental of a hospital grade pump if not purchasing a personal pump. If 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. During the day, try for every 2 hours, or more often.
- Pump both breasts after breastfeeding, emptying each breast completely.
- Don't go longer than one 5-hour stretch at night without breastfeeding or pumping.

### If you are pumping:

- Make sure your flange size is correct. Ask your lactation consultant or a specialist if you are unsure.
- 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 and decrease speed after the milk starts spraying out, or after 2 minutes. This will help empty your breast. You can adjust the pressure depending on your individual comfort level. You can go back to the faster speed lower suction to try to stimulate another let down.
- Before and during pumping, place a heating pad, warm wet cloth on your neck to promote relaxation. Don't put heat directly on your breasts.

- Try power pumping every day to help boost your milk-making hormones. To power pump for 10 minutes, rest 10 minutes, pump 10 minutes, rest 10 minutes, and repeat for one hour. This should only be done once a day.

### Watch what you eat and drink

Good eating habits help make good breast milk. Adopt these habits:

- Eat at least 3 balanced meals and 2 healthy protein snacks every day.
- Do not try to lose weight while trying to boost your milk supply.
- Adequate hydration and nutrition is important. Drink when you're thirsty. Some moms find it helpful to keep water and snacks next to the place they frequently nurse.
- Take a daily multivitamin, or the vitamins recommended by your physician.

### Self care

Self care can be an important tool to decrease stress and fatigue. Stress and fatigue can lead to lower milk supply.

Self care looks different for every person. It's important to accept help and to take time for self care, even if its just a few minutes.

Lactation consultants are readily available to help you troubleshoot your milk supply, and the appointments are typically covered by insurance. To set up an appointment please scan the QR code.

