

# Breastfeeding: *Increasing Milk Production*

This fact sheet gives information and tips to help you produce more breast milk for your baby.

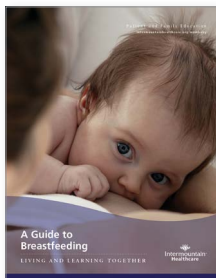
It is common for nursing women to experience low milk supply from time to time. There are many things you can do to boost your milk production, and your extra effort can make a big difference to your baby.

## Why do I have a low milk supply?

There are several possible reasons for a low milk supply. The most common is a lack of demand (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, 1-800-822-BABY (2229).** 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 take 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 breasts to the flanges [FLANJ-ez]. (The flanges are the plastic funnels that come in the pump kit with the tubing that attaches to the pump.)

If cost is an issue, consider that:

- Most insurance companies will cover either the rental cost for a hospital grade pump, or the purchase cost of a personal double electric pump. If you're on Medicaid and 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.

### *About 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.
- Before and during pumping, place a heating pad, warm wet cloth, or warm “bed buddy” on your shoulder, neck, or chest. (You can make a bed buddy by filling a tube sock or fabric bag with beans or rice. Warm it in the microwave.)
- Try power pumping every day to help boost your milk-making hormones. To power pump, pump for 10 minutes, rest 10 minutes, pump 10 minutes, rest 10 minutes, and repeat for one hour.



## Watch what you eat and drink

Good eating habits help make good breast milk.

Adopt these habits:

- *Sit down* and eat at least 3 balanced meals and 2 healthy protein snacks every day.
- Drink 6 to 8 full glasses of water or juice every day. Limit your intake of caffeine.
- Take a daily multivitamin with iron.

## Sleep and rest

Being tired or fatigued can decrease your milk production. Try these tips to help get enough rest:

- Go to bed early and take naps during the day. Turn off the phone.
- Ask for help with daily tasks — at least until your milk supply is adequate.
- Set aside a weekend for a mini-vacation. Do nothing but eat, relax, nurse, and pump. Focus on increasing your milk supply.

## Relax

Stress can decrease your body's ability to make milk.

Try the following to help yourself relax:

- Take a warm bath or shower.
- Ask for a back rub while you're pumping.
- Escape a little. Watch a video or read a book. Get a massage, manicure, or pedicure.
- Put on some soothing music, close your eyes, and think positive thoughts. Think of everything you're giving your baby by breastfeeding, and be kind to yourself.
- Remember: practice makes progress.

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