

After reading this lesson, click the survey link at the end to answer a few questions and receive nutrition education credit for your class.

Increasing Milk Supply



Do you feel that your milk supply is low?
If so, you are not alone. Many mothers feel this way at some point in their breastfeeding journey.

Have you ever experienced any of these?

1. **Your baby nurses frequently.** It is normal for babies to nurse 8-12 times or more in a 24 hour period. During a growth spurt, babies will increase how long and how often they breastfeed. Avoid giving formula during this time as the more you breastfeed, the more milk your body will make.
2. **You aren't able to remove much breastmilk when pumping.** Your baby is much better at getting milk from the breast than a breast pump. If you are wanting a more accurate way of knowing how much milk your baby gets from the breast, schedule a feeding evaluation appointment with an International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC).
3. **Your baby is fussy.** Babies cry and fuss for many reasons. It is important to look at all potential causes for crying. As long as your baby is gaining weight and has the appropriate number of wet and dirty diapers, there is no reason to assume this fussiness is due to hunger.
4. **Your baby doesn't nurse as long or as often as they used to.** It is normal for babies to take less time to get the milk they need as they become more efficient at draining the breast. As their stomach size increases to hold more milk, they will be able to go longer between feedings.
5. **Your breasts don't feel as full as they used to.** In the beginning, your body may start by making more milk than your baby needs. As your baby only drinks what he or she needs, your body will slowly decrease the amount of milk you make in order to match baby's needs.



Now, let's discuss signs that could mean your baby is not taking in enough milk at the breast.

1. **Low weight gain or no weight gain.** Weight gain is the best way to tell that baby is getting enough breast milk. Babies should be back up to their birth weight by 10-14 days of age and should be gaining around $\frac{1}{2}$ an ounce to 1 ounce per day. If your baby is not gaining enough weight, talk to his or her doctor and an IBCLC as soon as possible.
2. **Decreased output.** It is important to keep track of your baby's wet and dirty diapers. Beginning at 4 days old, your baby should have 6-8 wet diapers every day. Your baby should have 3-4 dirty diapers per day from 4 days old to 4-6 weeks old. One dirty diaper should be at least the size of a quarter. After 4-6 weeks of age, it is normal for stooling patterns to change from every day to every other day or even less frequently. Continue to count wet diapers as these should remain at 6-8 per day regardless of age.

If your baby has decreased output or issues with weight gain, talk to your baby's doctor and an IBCLC as soon as possible. Finding the reason for low milk supply is important. We will discuss potential causes and things that you can do now to help increase your supply and improve your breastfeeding experience.

Common Causes of Low Milk Supply

1. **Supplementation.** Skipping breastfeeding sessions or offering anything other than breastmilk can decrease milk supply. If supplementation is ever required for medical or weight gain reasons, always pump to empty your breasts. Just remember: An empty breast makes more milk.
2. **Scheduling Feedings.** It is important to follow infant's hunger cues and offer the breast despite what the clock says. Some early hunger cues are sucking on the hands, smacking the lips, and rooting.
3. **Timing feedings.** Breastmilk starts out thin at the beginning of the feeding and slowly changes to a thicker, higher fat milk toward the end of the feeding. This higher fat milk will help baby gain weight and keep him or her full longer. Baby should be allowed to completely empty the first breast before offering the second.
4. **Baby has trouble removing milk.** Sometimes baby has trouble getting milk from the breast. If baby is not able to remove milk from the breast, mom's milk supply will decrease over time. Make an appointment with your baby's doctor if you feel he or she is having trouble removing milk from the breast.
5. **Medical issues with mom.** There are some medical issues which can make it hard to make enough breastmilk. If you feel any of the below issues are affecting your ability to make milk, talk to your doctor. Many times, treatment for these issues can also help resolve problems with milk supply.
 - Excessive blood loss during delivery
 - Low iron (anemia)
 - Hypothyroidism
 - Retained placenta
 - Previous breast surgery
 - Smoking
 - Hormonal issues (such as fertility issues)
 - Medications (Example: Sudafed)

Once you have found a cause for your low milk supply, you can begin working on increasing your supply again. Below are ways to help increase your milk supply.

Ways to Increase Milk Supply

1. **Increase breast emptying.** The very best way to increase milk supply is to increase the amount of times you empty your breasts in a day. If baby is latching to the breast, breastfeed more frequently. If you are pumping, pump more often. The goal is to empty your breasts at least 8-12 times in 24 hours. If you have to supplement your baby due to weight gain issues, be sure to pump your breasts every time a supplement is given.
2. **Address any medical issues that may be affecting milk production.** If you think that you or your baby may have a medical issue that could be affecting your ability to make enough milk, talk to your doctor as soon as possible.
3. **Make sure your baby is awake and actively drinking the entire time they are nursing.** Watch and listen for swallows. If your baby begins to fall asleep, wake them.
4. **Take a nursing holiday.** Plan a time where you and your baby do nothing but cuddle, nurse, do skin to skin, and rest.

If none of these suggestions work for you, talk to your doctor and a lactation consultant to explore other options that may be available to you.

Struggling with low milk supply can be frustrating. It is important that you know that any amount of breastmilk you give to your baby is good for their health. There is so much more to breastfeeding than just breastmilk. The time that you and your baby have together at the breast is a beautiful bonding experience.

STOP!

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