

How to Make The Right Amount of Milk

Your baby has a job to do: she or he has to tell your breasts how much milk to make! To do this your baby needs unlimited access to your breasts. Your job is to offer your breast in response to your baby's feeding cues, and your baby's task is to take out as much milk as he or she needs. Low milk supply can result when this communication between baby and breast is somehow disrupted. Think of it as a feedback loop.

Here are some guidelines to help you:

- **Follow your baby's signals.** Do not use the clock to determine the frequency or length of feeds (unless directed to do so by your baby's doctor). Your newborn likely will want to feed every one to four hours.
- **Make sure your baby is swallowing.** Short, choppy movements (like gum-chewing) tell you your baby is sucking but not swallowing. A swallow is a slow, deep movement of the jaw followed by a soft exhalation from the nose – “kuh”. You may hear a gulp. If you are not sure when your baby is swallowing please ask your baby's doctor, nurse or your lactation consultant to help you. Many new mothers think the baby is feeding when the baby is only sucking. To be sure, go to globalhealthmedia.org and watch the video “Is Your Baby Getting Enough Milk”.
- **Switch breasts when swallows slow down.** Allow your baby to stay on the first breast until the swallows slow down and then offer the other. Your baby may begin to fidget or make little fussy noises to let you know the milk flow is too slow. If you wait a bit too long to switch breasts your baby will fall sleep but not be full. Most babies need one breast at some feeds and both breasts at others. Some will only ever take one breast. Some will always need both breasts. Much depends on your production and your baby's appetite.
- **Know when your baby has taken a good meal.** A full baby will pull away from the breast and show no interest in sucking. A baby who wants to latch again is still hungry. A newborn will only suck if hungry and will not suck “just for comfort”.
- **Avoid pacifiers.** Breastfed babies generally do not need pacifiers. Offering a pacifier instead of the breast can cause low supply. It's fine to use a pacifier for moments when you cannot feed. For example, baby is in the car seat, or on the changing table.
- **Pump for comfort.** If you have a lot of milk your baby may pull away, sated, after just one breast. If your unused breast is uncomfortably full it is okay for you to express (by hand or pump) your excess milk.
- **Oversupply.** Some mothers have so much milk that they may be need to feed the baby on the same breast for two feeds before the breast feels soft and the baby's swallows slow down. It may seem like a good idea to switch your baby to the second breast to relieve the fullness but this may cause the overproduction to continue, and might result in a gassy, fussy baby. It is better to allow your baby to finish the first breast before switching.