

How to Make More Milk

Milk supply is for the most part determined by how often the breasts are emptied. Empty breasts make milk faster.

For a thorough explanation of how breasts function, and everything you might do to improve your supply, please consider the book *Making More Milk*, 2nd edition, by West and Marasco. About \$20.

Wake your sleepy baby. Wake them after two hours of sleep during the day (watch for light or REM sleep as your baby will wake more easily) and three hours of sleep at night. For a full-term baby it works well to time the sleep interval rather than timing feeds from the start of one to the start of the next.

Pacifiers. Please offer your breast at every feeding cue and until your baby refuses to suck. Using a pacifier may result in underfeeding and low milk supply. However, it is ok to use a pacifier when baby is fussing and cannot be fed, e.g. on the changing table or in the car seat.

Give both breasts. Newborns will fall asleep if the milk flow is too slow. To keep your baby actively feeding switch breasts as soon as you notice swallows are slowing down. They are finished when they release the breast and have no interest in sucking.

Massage/compress breasts to help drain the breasts. You can increase your milk flow, and increase the fat content, by compressing your breast close to your chest wall. Relax your fingers when your baby pauses. Count four seconds and compress (squeeze and hold) again. The increased flow of milk will trigger your baby to drink.

Pump any time you need to give a bottle. A complete feed should take no more than 45 minutes. If your baby shows no signs of being satisfied after about thirty minutes of breastfeeding, finish the feed with a bottle of expressed milk or formula). Pump both breasts for 5 to 10 minutes to empty any residual milk.

“Pushing” breastfeeding. When your supply is very close to meeting your baby’s needs, and your baby is energetic, well-fed and effective, see how long you can go without topping off with a bottle. When you finally give a bottle, pump for 5-10 minutes. Do not try this approach with a sleepy, underweight baby as it can result in a reduction of your milk supply and poor or no weight gain.

Self care. Eat well and REST! Drink to satisfy your thirst. Extra fluids do not help. Anxiety and stress may impact supply for some mothers and taking care of yourself emotionally is really important too. Please take time for yourself every day.

Skin-to-skin. Enjoy lots of cuddling, skin-to-skin if practical. Holding your baby helps your milk supply and will be your baby’s favorite place. Human infants are the same as all primates, designed to be held. Adult arms are a newborn’s habitat.

Food. There are no concrete guidelines about diet but some interesting hints that plenty of protein, healthy fats and green leafy vegetables can be helpful. Loads of information online (and in the *Making More Milk* book) but keep in mind that the major stimulant for your supply is how well and often your breasts are emptied. Foods and herbs cannot compensate for infrequent emptying.

Vitamins. Consider a postnatal vitamin supplement:

<https://infantrisk.com/content/postnatal-vitamins-while-breastfeeding>

Herbs. There are no good studies to confirm that herbs will increase your milk supply. However, various herbs have become popular, and there are many companies providing herbal supplements. One example is legendairymilk.com. Legendairy's "bundle" has become popular - three products to try sequentially.

Here's information on various lactogenic herbs:

<https://herblore.com/overviews/galactagogues-herbs-that-increase-breastmilk-production/>

Motherlove.com is another very popular site.

Avoid large quantities of sage, mint and parsley as they may reduce your supply.

Treat herbs as you would a drug: let your PCP know what you are taking, and stop if you notice any unpleasant side effects. Fenugreek has been known to cause severe allergic reactions especially in mothers allergic to peanuts or chickpeas. If you have type 1 diabetes or are on thyroid replacement hormone please consult your PCP prior to starting fenugreek.