



Increasing Low Milk Supply

- Breastmilk stays in a baby's stomach about 1-2.5 hours so they want to breastfeed every 2-3 hours. Most babies have a strong need to suck to self-soothe or need to be held by their mom to feel secure.
- It is normal and healthy for babies to cluster feed (breastfeed for a few hours in a row). They do this when they need more calories to help them grow. This is called a growth spurt. This is not a problem to fix. It is a time to let your baby breastfeed as much as they want. Cluster feeding will last long enough for you to make more milk that has more calories. It can take a few days to one week.
- Babies can be fussier in evenings and nurse more frequently at that time. Sometimes that is because you have less milk in your breasts at night. This is normal.
- As babies get older they get much better at getting your milk out so breastfeeding time is shorter.
- If your goal is to only breastfeed, try to not supplement with formula. Feeding your baby formula without pumping your breasts will create low milk supply.
- Breasts can become softer after your milk supply has adjusted to your baby's needs.
- Some women get very little when pumping. The amount of milk that you can pump is not an accurate measure of your milk supply. A baby with a healthy suck empties your breast much more efficiently than any pump. It is very common for pumping output to decrease over time.

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Potential causes for low milk supply:

- Supplementing with formula without pumping
- Baby prefers a bottle once they drink from one
- Pacifiers and nipple shields
- Feeding baby on a schedule
- Sleepy baby who doesn't breastfeed for 15+ minutes at feeding times
- Stopping a feeding based on a schedule and not paying attention to baby still wanting to breastfeed
- Offering only one breast per feeding
- Small or late preterm baby
- Health problems with mom (anemia, hypothyroidism, retained placenta, postpartum hemorrhage)
- Breast surgery, breast injury, birth control methods, smoking tobacco, inverted or short shafted nipples (prevents baby from getting a deep latch)

Increasing your milk supply:

To increase milk supply you need to remove all the milk in your breasts every 2-3 hours around the clock. The goal is to empty breasts 8-12 times every 24 hours.

- Make sure baby is breastfeeding in a good position and a deep latch.
- Breastfeed every 1.5 to 2 hours during the day and at least every 3 hours at night as long as you hear baby drinking.
- Switch sides 3 or more times during each feeding. This is called switch nursing.
- Avoid pacifiers and bottles when possible.
- Give baby only breastmilk when possible. If you need to feed baby formula you'll need to start breast pumping regularly to make enough milk.
- Self-care for mom is a must. Rest, sleep when baby sleeps. Drink plenty of water and eat a balanced diet with lots of fruits and vegetables.
- Consider pumping and galactagogues. Some galactagogues are fenugreek, fennel, marshmallow root, nettles, cilantro, cumin, brewer's yeast and ground flax seed. Reference Food, Herbs, Medicine & Drugs trifold brochure from Lactation Services if you delivered at Kootenai Health.

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