Increasing Your Milk Supply

The amount of milk a mother produces depends on how much the breasts are stimulated by the baby's sucking. Your breastmilk will increase to match your baby's increased need if you breastfeed more frequently — 1, 2 or 3 hourly or whenever your baby seems unsettled or hungry.

As your baby grows he may have times when he is unsettled and seems to want to breastfeed more frequently. It used to be thought that these were growth spurts and the baby needed more milk. However, we now know that the baby's milk intake does not increase much between 1-6 months. These periods of unsettled or fussy behaviour occur at around 6 weeks, 3 months, and 6 months of age, but can happen any time. Try simply following baby's lead and offering more frequent breastfeeds and extra cuddles for a few days.

Many breastfeeding mothers find that their breasts return to a smaller size after a few weeks of breastfeeding. This doesn't mean that your milk is disappearing. Your breasts are now becoming more efficient at making milk.

What can I do to build up my milk supply?

- Feed more often, possibly up to 12 times a day or more.
  - Offer the breast as a comforter, instead of using a pacifier.
  - Shorten the length of time between feeds. Feed your baby even when he is awake and settled. Don't wait for him to cry.
  - Wake your baby before you go to bed to fit in an extra feed.
- Offer each breast twice or more at each feed.
- Check the positioning and attachment of your baby. A baby can milk the breast more efficiently if correctly attached (see Fact Sheet *Putting Your Baby to the Breast*).
- Top-up feeds. A short breastfeed 20-30 minutes after a feed is often enough to satisfy your baby and will help build up your milk supply. Unlike a bottle, your breasts are never empty. Your body is making milk all the time and most quickly when your breasts feel soft.
- If your baby won't cooperate with extra feeds, express milk between and after breastfeeds.
- Avoid giving bottle-feeds of anything except your breastmilk as these reduce your baby's appetite and his need to suck. Even very young babies are able to learn to drink from a small cup. Bottle-feeds of other milks will reduce your own milk supply.
- Rest as much as possible. Eat well and drink when you are thirsty. Relaxation will help your milk to flow (see Fact Sheet *How Breastfeeding Works*).

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- Massaging breasts during feeds may also be helpful.
- Cuddle your baby skin-to-skin to help your hormones to increase your supply.
- If you smoke, give up, or at least cut down, as this affects your milk supply.

How do I know if my baby is getting enough milk?

- Your baby will have at least 5 heavily wet disposable nappies or 6-8 pale wet cloth nappies in 24 hours, if no other fluids or solids are being given. Bowel motions will be soft and become less frequent as baby gets older.
- Your baby seems reasonably alert, active and happy.
- Your baby will have some weight gain and growth in length and head size.
- Babies need at least 6-8 breastfeeds in 24 hours and many new babies may need 12 or more.

Further Reading

- Fact Sheet *How Breastfeeding Works*
- Fact Sheet *Putting Your Baby to the Breast*
- Fact Sheet *The Complementary Feed*

For more information contact your Child Health Centre or the Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA).

Breastfeeding Helpline
1800 mum 2 mum
1800 686 268

The ABA Breastfeeding Helpline is available 7 days a week and is staffed by trained volunteer breastfeeding counsellors.

If you need help making phone calls in English, ring the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) on 131 450.

Email counselling and more information is available at *www.breastfeeding.asn.au*

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