



Low Milk Supply with an Older Baby

Some mothers find that as their baby gets older they are not able to make enough milk to satisfy baby's needs. Often this coincides with a mother using a breast pump because she is away from her baby for work or school or with the introduction of solids.

- For the most part, **a baby nursing at the breast** will usually increase supply better than a pump. Breastfeeding is dependent upon hormones and milk supply usually responds better to a baby than to a pump.
- **As your baby gets older, he or she will become more efficient** at the breast. It is not uncommon for a baby to drain the breast in 3-5 minutes. Some mothers interpret this as having no milk. If your baby is satisfied and gaining weight, **this may be normal**. Your baby may also nurse less frequently – every 3-5 hours rather than every 2-3 hours. Your breasts may not get as full before a feeding and you may be less aware of let down as your baby gets older.
- **When you are home with your baby, nurse frequently**. If your baby seems distracted while nursing, feel free to wake baby from the end of his/her nap to nurse. Many babies nurse better when they are drowsy.
- You may find it helps to **add either a middle of the night feed** or an early morning feed to both increase intake and increase supply. If your baby is not waking in the night, try waking your baby. Put baby to both breasts. Most babies will nurse well and immediately return to sleep.
- **It does not matter what time of the day your baby receives nourishment**. It only matters that they receive enough for them to grow and thrive. You may find it works better to feed your baby more in the evenings and early mornings. Your body may be able to adapt by producing less during the day while at work.
- If your baby is starting to eat solids (finger foods, cereal, or baby foods), always **offer the breast before the food** when at home. When at day care, you may have your provider offer the food before the milk, especially if they are giving your baby pumped breast milk in a bottle. You may want to consider having your provider give your baby the breastmilk in a cup (with a lid and a spout). Your baby may be satisfied with a bit less milk this way. If baby is older than 6 months, you may also want to use juice in your baby's cereal as a way of using less pumped breast milk.

- **If taking your baby to day care**, always try to nurse after you get to day care in the morning (before you go to work/school) and again when you get to day care in the afternoon (before you go home). This decreases the amount of time that your breasts go without stimulation from your baby. It also allows you to be exposed to the same organisms (germs) as your baby, which in turn signals your body to make antibodies which will transfer to your baby and help to protect your baby.
- Try to **decrease the amount of time between pumpings** at work. Frequency of pumpings is more important than how long you pump. Try to pump more frequently, but for shorter time periods (three – 10 minute pumpings rather than two – 15 minute pumpings). Even a 5 minute pumping over your lunch break may help. Pump at home only if you are separated from baby. If you want to pump in addition to nursing at home, wait about a ½ hour after nursing.
- Worrying about the amount you pump at work will only make it worse. **Cut yourself some slack!** Don't stop pumping, but accept what you are able to pump.
- **If you are exclusively pumping**, the Symphony may be more effective than the Pump In Style. The Pump In Style Advanced may be more effective than the Pump In Style Original.
- You may try to **power pump** daily, or several times a week, to mimic cluster nursing and a growth spurt. In the morning, pump for 12 minutes/break for 12 minutes/pump for 12 minutes/break for 12 minutes/pump for 12 minutes.
- During nursing or pumping, **try breast compression** as baby slows down his/her suckling or you notice less milk entering the collection bottle. Gently compress your breast tissue for 5-10 seconds. When milk slows down again, rotate your hand on your breast and compress again. Continue until you have circled your breast tissue or until your breast appears drained. Use of a hands-free bustier will support the bottles and keep your hands free for this purpose.
- **You may want to try an herbal galactagogue like fenugreek, blessed thistle or goat's rue.** A galactagogue may help to jump start, or boost your milk production, within several days. However, the real key is milk removal. If you are not removing milk, by baby or the pump, the galactagogue may be of little help. If you are taking other medications, it is important to check for cross medication reactions. Except for a possible allergic reaction, most of the galactagogues do not have strong side effects. Feel free to discuss the use of a galactagogue with a lactation consultant.
- If you find that an herbal galactagogue is not effective, you may want to discuss taking **Reglan**. It is a prescription medication that increase prolactin levels and may be effective at increasing milk supply, but may also have undesirable side effects.
- **If you find that your supply decreases with return of your menses**, try a calcium/magnesium supplement (1000mg/500mg) daily.
- **Avoid pseudophedrine** (an ingredient found in decongestants, such as Sudafed). This medication is considered safe for you to take, but may significantly decrease your milk supply.

MilkWorks is a Comprehensive Resource to Help You Breastfeed Your Baby

5930 So. 58th (in the Trade Center), Lincoln, NE 68516 - (402) 423-6402 - milkworks.org - c2006,2008

- **Progestin-only birth control methods (Depo-Provera, Norplant, the mini-pill, the Mirena IUD and the vaginal ring) are better for nursing mothers** than methods containing estrogen. If milk supply is well established (baby is at least 6 weeks, or preferably older), these methods are less likely to cause a supply problem. **But some women are more sensitive to hormones than others.** The mini-pill, IUD and vaginal ring have the advantage of being able to be stopped or removed if a mother is experiencing a low supply due to the medication.
- Realize that **you have two full-time jobs** if you are working outside the home and nursing your baby. Resist the temptation to fill your week ends with errands and activities. Instead spend time nursing and being close to your baby. **Breastfeeding is a short term investment that has long term results for you and your baby.**