



Re-Lactation

Please note: This information is designed to complement the individual care provided by our Breastfeeding Medicine Providers or our IBCLCs.

Some mothers decide they want to return to breastfeeding after weaning their baby to formula. While it may not be possible to return your baby to exclusive breastfeeding, remember that any amount of time at the breast, and any amount of your milk, is good for your baby! We would highly recommend working with a lactation consultant (IBCLC) to help you with this process.

- Depending upon how old your baby is, and how long it has been since you removed any milk at all, you may be able to start making milk again. However, it will not occur overnight and it will require some extra time and effort.
- If your baby has not latched at all, or in a while, a correct latch needs to be established. This may be quite easy, or it may require some time and patience.
- To get started, determine the amount of formula your baby is currently drinking on a daily basis.

If your baby is willing and eager to latch:

- Put your baby to the breast at least 8 times in a 24-hour day for at least 10 to 15 minutes per breast. Make sure that you obtain a good, deep latch so baby can stimulate milk production. (See our various Latch Handouts - [1](#), [2](#), [3](#)) You may want to gently massage your breasts before nursing (or pumping) to help stimulate the hormones involved.
- If you know you are making some milk, you may find it helps to rent a scale and weigh your baby before and after a feeding to see what your baby is removing while at the breast.
- Offer your baby the same amount of milk they have been taking in a bottle after they have been to breast. (See [Paced Bottle Feeding Handout](#)) Feed any pumped milk you have first, and then finish with formula. Do not mix them together.
- If your baby refuses to finish the supplement, note the amount baby did take on a feeding log.
- If your baby does not appear satisfied after supplement, let your baby suck on your finger for a few seconds, talk to your baby, or have someone else hold your baby. If your baby still appears hungry, give your baby another ounce and note the amount in the log.

- After your baby has been fed, use an electric or manual breast pump for 10-15 minutes. Do not be discouraged if you do not see any milk at first. Stimulation of your breasts is very important at this time. Try and pump or hand express milk every 2-3 hours daytime and 3-4 hours at night for at least 8 times in 24 hours. Save any milk you obtain to supplement at the next feeding.

If your baby will not latch, or latches for less than 15 minutes:

- Double pump for 10-15 minutes immediately after feeding, or attempting to feed your baby at the breast. Use this milk to supplement your baby.
- Focus on building your milk supply with a breast pump as you feed your baby pumped milk and continue to offer your breast. Offer formula after the pumped milk based on how much you have been bottle feeding your baby each day.
- Consider using a lactation aid device (*Supplemental Nursing System by Medela or or Lact Aid brand*) at the breast to keep your baby interested in the breast AND get fed there, as you build your milk supply.
- Hold your baby skin to skin frequently, especially while bottle feeding. Be patient and don't force your baby to eat at your breast. Make sure time spent at the breast is pleasant for both of you.

While you are building your milk supply and encouraging your baby to latch and remove all of your milk:

- Do naked weight checks on the same scale every 3-7 days, depending on the age of the baby and how it is going at the breast. You can also weigh baby before and after a feeding to see if the volume they remove is going up.
- Discuss the use of a galactagogue with your lactation consultant. Galactagogues are [medications](#), which may help increase your milk supply. They are over-the-counter [herbs](#) that are available without a prescription.
- Continue to work with your lactation consultant until you are comfortable with your milk supply and baby's weight gain.
- Do not get discouraged! Remember that efforts to increase your milk supply will likely take at least three days before you observe a significant increase. Any amount of breastmilk is beneficial to your baby, so even gradual increases are significant! If you have not removed milk for over one week, it will likely take even longer.

Creating a healthier community by helping mothers breastfeed their babies.

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