

Abundant Milk Production

If you have a naturally high milk supply and a large storage capacity in your breasts, it can make some parts of breastfeeding easier. However, if your supply is very high and you remove milk frequently, you and your baby may both be uncomfortable. Your breasts may be continuously engorged or painful and baby may experience symptoms associated with getting a high amount of **“foremilk,”** which is the lower-fat milk removed at the beginning of a feeding.

Excessive foremilk will move through a baby quickly, resulting in gas and frequent hunger. Other signs of a high milk supply may include a baby who chokes, sputters or pulls off the breast with let-down, and/or a baby who has frequent loose, and often green, stools. You may experience constant leaking of the breasts, plugged ducts or mastitis, or an uncomfortable fullness of your breasts.

If you have an abundant milk supply that is causing you or your baby issues, the following may help:

- Before feeding your baby, **massage your breast.** Gently rub your breast for about a minute, using your fingers, knuckles, or the palm of your hand.
- Once suckling and swallowing stops, if you feel your baby has really drained the first side and wants more to eat, massage your other breast and switch sides.
- **Try to emphasize one breast at each feeding.** Keeping milk IN the breast sends a powerful message to your milk-making cells to slow down milk production. **HOWEVER,** if you feel uncomfortably full on the second breast, massage it well and offer it to baby. **OR,** pump the second breast briefly, just long enough to relieve the pressure.
- Alternate the breast you start on at each feeding.

As your baby gets higher fat feedings, they should feel full longer and eat less often. This will help to decrease your production also. After a few days, IF your baby is still asking to eat more often than every 3 hours, AND you are still feeling very full, you may benefit from offering the same side for a 3 hour “block” of time. **It is very important to be SURE you have too much milk before you limit your baby to feeding on one breast for any set time period.** Please see your IBCLC frequently during this period to weigh your baby naked and assess your milk production.

Initially, you may need to “pump for comfort” right after, or between, feedings. Massage your breast(s) and pump just enough to soften your breast(s) slightly. Removing milk stimulates more production, so you want to pump **only as needed.** **It is a balancing act;** you are trying to avoid plugged ducts AND trying to leave milk in the breast so that your milk-making cells slow down. If you are pumping on a regular basis, pump a slightly smaller amount every day. **It can take a week or two to get your production down to match your baby’s needs.**

If you are having trouble getting comfortable in the morning, or waking too full in the night, some



mothers find it helpful to pump both their breasts first thing in the morning, nurse baby on both breasts, and then proceed as above with draining one side well at a feed. If you do this, gradually decrease the amount of milk you pump each morning until you no longer need to pump.

If you continue to produce too much milk, herbal remedies are also an option:

- **Sage:** Sage Extract by Herbpharm can be helpful. ([Link to purchase](#)) Start with 25 drops in one ounce of water or juice at bedtime after emptying both breasts. It seems to work better if taken when breasts are empty. You should notice less fullness the next morning. If not, try 40 drops that evening and watch supply the next day. Maximum dose is 60 drops. Once you notice a definite decrease in production do NOT take any more Sage. Wait a few days and if supply comes back up, take another dose and talk to your lactation consultant about your frequency of removal. Some moms find it helpful to take one dose every week or two to keep production at a comfortable level.
- **Peppermint or Spearmint:** Mint tea is available at most grocery stores. *Be sure to get an herbal mint tea – not a flavored black tea.* To make 2-4 cups of mint tea:
 - Pour 2-4 cups of boiling water over 2-4 teabags and steep for 10 minutes until nice and strong. To increase strength, use more tea bags than cups of water.
 - You may keep it in the fridge, reheat in the microwave, or put all four cups in a sports bottle to sip at room temperature all day long. You may sweeten the tea if desired.
 - Some women will add sage for a stronger effect.

You may also combine mint tea with sage tea (available at most health food stores). To make 4 cups of mint/sage tea:

- Pour 4 cups of boiling water over 3-4 mint teabags and 3 sage teabags and steep for 10 minutes. Drink hot or cold, sweetened or unsweetened.
- As your milk production slows, you can gradually back off to one or two cups a day.
- Do not stop it suddenly. You may need to continue a cup or two a day until you feel your supply has stabilized. Even then, keep a box of tea on hand.

Most women who make a lot of milk work hard to slow it down. If you slow it too much, you can usually speed it back up again in a matter of hours. Once your milk supply has decreased, and you are not drinking the tea for a while, you may suddenly need the tea again. For example, if your baby gets a cold, and wants to nurse more often, your milk may speed back up. When your baby gets better, and doesn't need so much milk, you may find yourself making too much milk again. Keep some tea around so you can start drinking it before things get out of hand!

Will mint candies work? It is the oil of the mint that slows production, so "Altoid" mints may help. Dosing is unknown, but it may take quite a few mints over the course of the day (like one an hour). You may want to combine the mint candies with some tea - and brush your teeth often!

Note: If you are still not comfortable with your milk supply after adding herbal remedies, please consider seeing our Breastfeeding Medicine Specialist for prescription options.

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