



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 spending time away from her baby for work or school,, or baby sleeping “through the night” .

- **A baby nursing at the breast** will usually stimulate milk better than a pump.
- **As your baby gets older, he or she will become more efficient** at the breast. It is not uncommon for a baby over 2 months of age 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 feel as full before a feeding and you may be less aware of let down as your baby gets older.
- **If you determine your supply is low, when you are home with your baby nurse frequently.** If your baby seems distracted while nursing, feel free to offer your breast at 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. Most babies will nurse well and immediately return to sleep.
- 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 germs as your baby, which in turn signals your body help to protect your baby with specific factors in the milk.
- 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 an extra 5 minute pumping 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.
- The way you use your breastpump can make a difference. You need flanges that fit well, allowing the nipple to travel into the tunnel comfortably. You should use the highest amount of suction that is comfortable. And using breast compressions while pumping can improve removal. An excellent video demonstrating this can be found at:
<http://newborns.stanford.edu/Breastfeeding/MaxProduction.html> .

- When milk flow stops after your first let-down, you take off one flange, and use your hand to compress your breast to move milk toward the pump. Continue until flow again stops, and switch to the other breast. (A special pumping bustier or sports bra with holes cut at the nipple area can hold the flanges in place for you, so you can have both hands free to compress your breasts.) Repeat until no milk is removed, then hand express each side until you cannot remove any more milk. Hand expression is shown in the video above, and consists of pushing in toward your chest wall with your fingers and thumb about an inch away from the base of your nipple, then gently squeezing the fingers toward the thumb to compress the milk ducts. Do NOT pull outward on your nipple.
- 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. Cover your chest with a blanket while pumping and do not watch.
- **If you are exclusively pumping**, the Symphony is often more effective than the Pump In Style.
- You may try to **power pump** daily, or several times a week, to mimic cluster nursing and a growth spurt. You pump for 12 minutes/break for 12 minutes/pump for 12 minutes/break for 12 minutes/pump for 12 minutes.
- During nursing, **try breast compression** as baby slows down his/her suckling. 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.
- **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. 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. (See *Not Enough Milk*)
- **If you find that your supply decreases with return of your menses**, try a calcium/magnesium supplement (1500mg/750mg) daily.
- **Avoid pseudoephedrine** (an ingredient found in decongestants, such as Sudafed). This medication is considered safe for you to take, but may significantly decrease your milk supply.
- **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 weekends 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.**