Breast Feeding – Re-Establishing Milk Supply

A woman who has recently stopped breast feeding her baby or who did not start breast feeding following birth, can try to re-establish her production of breast milk. This process is called re-lactation. This will take patience, commitment and persistence.

Re-establishing your milk supply depends upon breast stimulation. The best ways to do this are to put your baby to the breast for feedings and/or to express breast milk using a breast pump. Breast stimulation helps to increase levels of the hormone prolactin. Prolactin is known as the "milk hormone" and helps to initiate and increase your milk supply.

**If your baby is willing or able to suckle at the breast:**

- Put your baby to the breast frequently for 10 to 15 minutes every 2 to 3 hours. This will be at least 8 to 12 times in 24 hours.
- Putting your baby to the breast at night is especially helpful. The milk-producing hormone, prolactin, is increased at this time.
- You might try putting the baby to the breast either before or after offering the bottle.

**If your baby is unwilling or unable to suckle at the breast:**

- Do skin to skin contact by holding your baby to your bare chest and offer the breast anytime the baby shows interest.
- Stimulate your breasts by using a high quality double set-up, electrical breast pump. Pump every 3 hours for 10 to 15 minutes (even at night).

**Factors that reduce breast milk production:**

- Stress
- Birth control pills (especially those containing estrogen), patches, or shot
- Water pills
- Cigarettes
- Weight loss
Supplementation:

- Your baby will need milk in some manner (by bottle feeding or Supplemental Nursing System) until you have established a full milk supply. Some women may need to supplement in addition to providing breast milk until their baby is weaned.

- Once your milk supply has been established, supplementation of your baby can gradually be decreased. This should be done under the supervision of your baby’s doctor or lactation consultant.

- Your baby’s weight must be monitored closely.

- Your baby’s urine and stool output must be monitored closely to be sure he is getting enough milk (6 to 8 wet diapers and 4 to 8 dirty diapers in a 24 hour time period.)

Call the Lactation Management Program Help Line at (816) 346-1309 if:

- Your milk production does not start in 2 weeks.

- You feel your baby may not be getting enough milk.

- You have questions or concerns.