

Breast Feeding - Re-establishing Milk Supply

Factors that reduce breast milk production:

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 requires 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. Once you start this process, it may take up to 14 days to note any changes in breasts or 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).

See the back side of this sheet for additional information!

Supplementation:

- Your baby will need full feedings of expressed breast milk or formula 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.)

Factors that reduce breast milk production:

- Stress
- Birth control pills (especially those containing estrogen), patches, or shot
- Water pills
- Cigarettes
- Losing weight too rapidly
- Hormonal conditions such as polycystic ovarian syndrome or high or low thyroid levels History of breast surgery or breast trauma

Call your breastfeeding specialist if:

- Your milk production does not start in 2 weeks.
- You feel your baby may not be getting enough milk.

Call the Children's Mercy Hospital Lactation Management Program Help Line at (816) 346-1309 if you have questions or concerns.