

Establishing and Maintaining Milk Supply

The first 10 days after delivery are the most critical time for milk production. To build and maintain a full milk supply, effective drainage of the breasts is important. A good feeding must include a sustained latch, active sucking for at least 5-10 minutes, visible or audible swallows with at least every 5 sucks, minimal to no nipple pain, and no pinched nipples when baby unlatches.

Tips to help you establish and maintain milk supply:

Day 1 to 3

- Hold your baby skin-to-skin as much as possible to help boost your body's milk-making hormones for you.
- Though your baby may be sleepy the first day, it's important for colostrum to be removed from your breasts in order to make milk.
- Remove colostrum at least 8 -12 times every 24 hours by:
 - Helping your baby breastfeed well from both breasts.
 - Hand expressing for at least five minutes and feeding all colostrum to your baby until your milk supply is in and baby is gaining weight, regardless of baby's breastfeeding ability.
 - Small amounts of colostrum can be fed by spoon, syringe or cup.
 - Pumping, followed by 5 minutes of hand expression if ANY of the following are present (even if your baby is breastfeeding):
 - Your baby was born less than 37 weeks gestation.
 - Your baby's birth weight was less than 5 pounds 8 ounces.
 - Your baby is not feeding well — at least eight times every 24 hours by the second day.
 - Your baby is not staying in the same room with you.
 - You are supplementing for any reason.
 - Your nurse or lactation specialist assessed that your breasts need extra stimulation.
- Expect that your baby will "cluster feed" — breastfeeding several times within a few hours — on the second and third day.
 - This is your baby's way of helping you to make milk.
 - Your baby may breastfeed back and forth on both breasts for several hours before seeming satisfied for a short time. This is normal.
 - If you are pumping, and your baby isn't breastfeeding, "cluster pump" (pumping for 15 to 20 minutes approximately every 30 minutes for two to three hours) on days two and three.
- If your baby is in the NICU, pump 8 to 12 times every 24 hours, even if your baby is breastfeeding well, until your baby is able to exclusively breastfeed.

Day 3 to 5

- Milk supply should increase by day three after a vaginal delivery, but can take up to five days after a C-section.
 - Your breasts should feel fuller before feedings and lighter after feedings.
 - Your baby should be satisfied after breastfeeding on both breasts.

Establishing and Maintaining Milk Supply (cont.)

- If you are exclusively pumping or your baby is not breastfeeding well, you should be pumping at least 8 ounces (240ml) every 24 hours.
- Get help from a lactation specialist if your supply is low on day five.
 - This is the best time to make adjustments to improve milk supply.
- Avoid letting your breasts become full, firm or engorged, as full breasts make less milk.
 - Remove milk frequently, preferably by breastfeeding.
 - Your breasts will make less milk if you wait until they are full before breastfeeding or pumping.

End of Week 1

- **Milk supply goal:** at least 20 ounces (600mL) every 24 hours.

End of Week 2 and beyond

- **Milk supply goal:** at least 24 ounces (720mL) every 24 hours.

How do I know if I have a full milk supply?

- A full milk supply (or “coming to volume”) for a single baby is approximately 24 ounces (720ml) every 24 hours. If you are pumping, you can easily see if you are making these amounts.
- If you are exclusively breastfeeding, use the following to help you determine your supply:
 - Your baby is feeding well at least 8 times every 24 hours and is satisfied for a while after.
 - You hear swallows with at least every five sucks by the end of day three.
 - Your breasts feel fuller or heavier before feeding and lighter after feeding.
 - Your baby’s wet and dirty diapers match the number and colors shown in the Feeding Record in your New Beginnings Resource Guide.
 - Your baby started gaining weight by day four.
 - Your baby is back to birth weight by day ten and continues to gain weight appropriately.

Work to achieve a full milk supply as soon as possible.

In most cases, if you do not produce a full milk supply within the first two weeks, it will be difficult to achieve a full supply later. While your baby might not require much milk initially, your breasts require frequent milk removal during this time. Only once you have been able to produce a full supply can you expect to be able to cut back a bit on milk removal without losing your supply.

Additional Information

- **Breast Capacity**
 - A woman with a smaller breast capacity (how much milk a breast holds before becoming full or firm) will need to breastfeed or pump more frequently than a woman who has a bigger breast capacity. Pumping will likely take less time for a woman with less breast capacity because she has less milk to remove.
 - Breast capacity is not equal to breast size.

Establishing and Maintaining Milk Supply (cont.)

- **Engorgement and Oversupply**
 - Pumping does not cause engorgement; lack of milk removal causes engorgement.
 - Some engorgement is a normal process of fluid movement in your body on days 3 to 5.
 - Once you make a full supply, if you are making too much milk, pump enough to remove milk but not to completely empty. The more you empty your breasts, the more milk you will make.
- **Fluid and Nutrition**
 - Drink enough fluids to satisfy your thirst. If you are dehydrated, you will make less milk.
 - Adequate nutrition and rest are important for full milk supply.
- **Consult a Lactation Specialist**
 - They can help if you notice you are having problems at any point along the way.