

This teaching sheet includes some tips to help you maintain your milk supply while you cannot feed your baby on a regular basis. Please ask your baby's lactation consultant, doctor or nurse if you have any questions or need help.

Is rest important?

Yes, rest can help you produce milk.

- Having a new baby or having a baby in the hospital can be a very hard time for you.
- Ask family and friends to help you with home or family chores and things that need to be done.

How much should I eat and drink?

- To make breast milk, you need 250 to 500 extra calories a day. Eat small meals more often if this is easier for you.
- Avoid getting dehydrated. For most people, this means you should drink eight 8 to 10-ounce (oz) glasses of non-caffeinated drinks each day.
- Avoid drinking too many fluids with caffeine.

How often should I breastfeed or pump?

The more you breastfeed or pump, the more milk you make.

- Babies most often breastfeed 8 to 12 times in 24 hours (every 2 to 3 hours) during the first 4 weeks of life.
- Pump as soon as possible in the first 6 hours if you know your baby will not be able to breastfeed.
- Continue to pump every 2 to 3 hours until your milk supply is well established. You can have 1 longer stretch between pumpings of 4 to 5 hours at night.

What if I only get a small amount of milk when I pump?

The amount of milk may show your actual milk supply.

- At first, it may be hard to relax and have a "let-down" with a pump. Let-down means that milk comes down into the nipple area.
- Try warm compresses or breast massage just before pumping. Look at a picture of your baby, or think positive thoughts about them while pumping. Try not to watch the collection bottles.
- Keep a pumping log to see how much milk you pump in a full day and night. This total tells you more than the amount of a single pump.
- Use hands-on pumping method.
- Expressing milk using your hands can help express colostrum to your baby during a NICU stay.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.

Maintaining your milk supply, continued

What if I need to pump for a long period of time?

In the hospital

Children's has electric pumps for you to use in the hospital that are free of charge. Ask your baby's nurse for one.

At home

If you need to pump for a long time, you may want to rent an electric pump.

- Rental pumps are much better than electric, battery or hand-held pumps that you can buy. The type of pump you use makes a difference.
- Many insurance companies may help cover the cost with a doctor's order.
- If you have WIC, you may be able to borrow a pump for free if your baby is in the hospital. Ask the WIC officer or your lactation consultant for more details.

What if I stop producing milk?

If you feel your milk has "dried up" and you still wish to breastfeed:

- It is possible for you to "relactate" or start producing milk again.
- You will need to breastfeed or express milk very often (8 to 12 times each day) to stimulate your milk supply.
- Ask the lactation consultant for more details.

Does stress affect my milk supply?

Stress and anxiety can slow down milk production and let-down.

- Try not to worry if you only produce small amounts of milk at first.
- Having a baby in the hospital is stressful, but breastfeeding can still be successful.
- Call or talk with people who can help support you.

What can I do if my baby cannot breastfeed?

If your baby cannot feed at your breast, offer skin-to-skin contact especially during feedings.

- For more privacy, wrap a blanket around your shoulders while you bottle or tube feed with your baby next to your breast. This helps them get used to the feel of this position.
- Offer your clean finger for them to suck on between feedings. Your finger is more like the breast in their mouth than a bottle nipple or pacifier.

If you have questions or need support, ask your baby's nurse to call the lactation consultant. If you need help right away, ask your baby's nurse to page the lactation consultant.

This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child's doctor or a member of your child's healthcare team about specific care of your child.

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