

Too much milk

Some women find their breasts feel really full much of the time at first. This may be uncomfortable, and the milk may come very fast when it lets down.

- The milk supply usually settles down in a few weeks.
- Try spacing feeds a little, and keeping feed times short (five to 15 minutes each side).
- You could try giving one breast per feed for a few days only, and keep baby on that side for longer.
- Make sure the baby is well attached, so the nipple is at the back of the baby's mouth.
- For relief for painful full breasts try ice packs, paracetamol, wear a supportive bra, express some milk under the shower, or use cabbage leaves.
- Wear a bra that gives good support but does not press in anywhere.
- If the milk comes too fast for the baby at the start of the feed, express a little milk first, or take the baby off while milk is spurting out.
- You can lean back a little for first few minutes of the feed then sit up to finish. Lying down to feed with baby on top of you is not a good idea, as your supply may decrease too much.
- Sometimes leaking is a problem when your breasts are full. Use absorbent nipple pads (not plastic lined ones).
- Wear dark patterned rather than light plain clothes as these do not show damp stains as much.
- Press over the nipples with the 'heels' of your hands to stop leaking if you feel it starting.

For more information contact:

- Local Community Child Health Nurse
- Local Family Doctor
- Ngala Family Resource Centre Helpline
8.00 a.m. - 8.00 p.m. 7 days a week
Telephone (08) 9368 9368
Outside metro area - Freecall 1800 111 546
www.ngala.com.au
- Parent Help Centre/Parenting Line
Telephone (08) 9272 1466 (24 hr service)
Outside metro area - Freecall 1800 654 432
- Australian Breastfeeding Association Helpline
Telephone (08) 9340 1200
www.breastfeeding.asn.au
- Australian Lactation Consultants Association
www.alca.asn.au

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breastfeeding
milk supply
concerns



Mothers often worry whether they have enough milk, or too much, and whether the baby is feeding too often. If the suggestions here do not help you to sort out your concerns, seek help, as it is usually possible to continue to breastfeed and have a satisfied baby.

Is there enough milk?

Many mothers think that they haven't enough milk when there is really plenty. These are some of the things many mothers worry about, but they are all normal and usually not signs of a low supply of milk.

- The breasts feel softer and may not leak as much. This is normal after the early weeks.
- Most babies have fewer bowel actions and shorter feeds as they get older.
- Breastmilk looks more watery and blue-ish than cow's milk. This is how it is supposed to look and does not mean that it is too 'weak'.
- Babies show the rooting reflex if something touches their cheek (they turn their head towards that thing, open their mouth and start sucking on it). So they suck on their fists or fingers much of the time. This does not always mean that they are hungry.
- As babies grow, they demand more feeds than usual. This is a way of boosting the milk supply. If frequent feeds are a problem, see overleaf.
- The baby is unsettled. There are many reasons for this that don't have anything to do with breastfeeding.
- You have small breasts - breast size is not related to how much milk you can make.

Some mothers worry that their milk is not good enough for their baby. This is not likely, because even if you are not eating well, breastmilk will be made using your body stores of nutrients, vitamins and minerals.

It is very rare that a mother can't make enough milk for her baby (except after some types of breast surgery). However, some babies do not suck well enough for the breasts to make enough milk.

These are signs that your baby is getting enough milk

- Six to eight wet nappies in 24 hours and several poos a day in the first few weeks of life. After this some babies can go a few days without a poo.
- The baby is putting on some weight.
- The baby seems bright and alert, and there are some times when the baby is awake and happy.

What to do if you really do not seem to have enough milk

- Don't worry - everyone has 'low' days and it is possible to build up a low supply.
- Check the baby's position and that the baby is sucking well.
- Offer both breasts every feed time. Change sides several times if your baby will not suck for long.
- Feed more often - every two or three hours - and/or offer top-ups at the breast in between feeds.

- Express milk after feeds especially if the baby is not feeding well (see the section on 'expressing' in the topic 'Breastfeeding - expressing and storing breastmilk').
- Make sure you get plenty of rest and good food. It is good to drink plenty, but extra fluid doesn't make more milk. Remember to have a drink each time the baby does.
- Cut down on smoking as this can make your milk supply less.
- If you need to give the baby extra formula from a bottle, try to give it only once at the end of the day. It is best not to give a bottle after every feed unless a doctor advises it. With young babies you can use a cup or syringe instead of a bottle.
- You can give extra milk at the breast through a supplementer (supply line).
- Talk to your doctor - there are some treatments which may help increase the amount of milk you have.

Frequent feeds

The main thing that helps you make plenty of milk is the baby taking milk from your breasts, so in general, the more often a baby feeds the more milk there will be for the next feeds.

- It is usually best to feed babies whenever they are hungry so that you will go on making the right amount of milk for your baby.
- However, some unsettled babies are happier if they are not being fed very frequently. It is best to ask a doctor or child health nurse if you think your baby is not comfortable with being fed so often.

- It is very important not to space feeds too much during the first few weeks when your milk is coming in.
- If your milk supply is low you need to feed often.
- If your supply is well established and your baby is unsettled, you can try spacing feeds to about two and a half to three hours (from the start of one feed to the start of the next) to see if this helps.
- Don't try to space breastfeeds further apart than three hours. If your baby is awake at about three hours, feed. If he sleeps longer by himself, that is fine.
- Make sure you offer both sides at each feed. This in itself will help your baby go longer before wanting another feed. To give one side only every three or four hours may lead to you not having enough milk.
- The end of the day is often difficult. An extra feed or two (top ups) are a good idea here, even if the rest of the day is going well.

