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Pumping Tips



In this lesson, we are going to talk about some tips to increase the amount of milk you are able to express.

Are you struggling to pump enough breast milk to meet your baby's needs? Are you wanting to increase the amount of milk you are able to express? If so, you are not alone. Many mothers feel the exact same way.



- **Get the correct flange fit.**

Pump flanges come in different sizes, so it is important to make sure you have the right size flange. A flange that fits well will allow you to be more comfortable while pumping and help you get more milk. If you are uncomfortable while pumping, contact your local WIC clinic and ask about trying a different size. Your WIC clinic will have a variety of different sizes of pump flanges, and can help you identify a size that may work better for you.

- **Make sure your pump is working properly.**

Having a pump that works well will help you get more milk. Be sure the suction on your pump is not turned up too high. In order to get more milk when pumping, turn the suction up just until it becomes uncomfortable, then turn down slightly until it is comfortable. If you are not sure your pump is working properly, call your local WIC clinic and ask to make an appointment with their Designated Breastfeeding Expert who will be able to check your pump.

- **Empty breasts frequently.**

Avoid skipping or prolonging time between pumping sessions because the more often you empty your breasts, the more milk you will make. Leaving milk in your breasts will tell your body your baby does not need that milk, and your body will adjust by making less milk. You may get more milk the first time you skip a pumping session, but over time this will cause your milk supply to decrease. In general, if your baby is less than six months old, express milk every two to three hours. If your baby is older than six months, express milk every three to four hours. Try adding in a pumping session when away from your baby. Pumping for even five minutes can help maintain your milk supply.

- **Try hands on pumping**

Begin by massaging both breasts. Double pump your breasts with an electric breast pump while compressing and massaging your breasts the entire time. Once your milk flow slows, turn off the pump, and massage your breasts again. Finish by either hand expressing or pumping one breast at a time, while continuing to massage until both breasts are drained. This should take no more than 20-25 minutes. This will not only help you to get more milk, but can also increase your milk supply.

- **Tip:** You may find it helpful to wear a hands-free pumping bra, or a sports bra with slits cut in it to hold the flanges in place, so you can have your hands free to massage your breasts.

- **Take care of yourself.**

It is not necessary to follow a special diet while breastfeeding. But if you have recently gone on a diet, consider adding in healthy, protein rich snacks. Cutting back on your calories too much can decrease milk supply. Continuing to take your prenatal vitamin can help your body recover after pregnancy. Be sure to stay hydrated and drink water according to thirst. Stress can also affect milk supply, so try relaxation techniques just prior to and during pumping.

- **Visualize your baby while pumping.**

Breast milk letdown is a very emotional response. Sometimes it is hard to letdown to a pump. Looking at a picture of your baby, listening to a recording of your baby cry, and smelling an article of your baby's clothing can all help with letdown. The more letdowns you have during a pumping session, the more milk you will express.

- **Take a nursing holiday.**

Life after returning to work or school can get busy. It can be helpful to take the weekend to relax with your baby, snuggle and nurse. Increasing nursing frequency when with your baby can increase milk supply, and help you pump more milk while separated.

Remember: Your baby is better at removing milk from the breast than a pump. It is not a good idea to pump to see how much milk your baby is getting. It is normal for babies to refuse or take less milk from a bottle and want to nurse more when with you. It is their way to reconnect with you after being apart. You are doing great! Contact your WIC clinic for more great tips like these.



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