

Breastfeeding FAQs: Supply and Demand

Breastfeeding is a natural thing to do, but it still comes with its fair share of questions. Here's what you need to know about your milk supply.

How Do I Know if I'm Making Enough Milk for My Baby?

Your baby's diapers can help you tell if your little one is getting enough to eat. The more your baby nurses, the more dirty diapers you'll see.

Pee

Because colostrum is concentrated, your baby may have only one or two wet diapers in the first 24 hours of life. After 3–4 days, look for:

- 6 or more wet diapers per day, with clear or very pale pee. Fewer wet diapers or darker pee may mean your baby's not getting enough to drink. If you see orange crystals in a wet diaper, call your baby's doctor. They're common in healthy, well-fed babies and usually not a cause for concern. But sometimes they're a sign that a baby isn't getting enough fluids.

Poop

A newborn's poop is thick and tarry at first, then more greenish-yellow as mom's milk comes in. After 3–4 days, look for:

- 4 or more yellow, seedy poops per day, usually one after each feeding. After about a month, babies poop less often, and many may go a few days without pooping.

Your baby probably is getting enough milk if your little one:

- feeds 8–12 times a day
- seems satisfied and content after eating
- sleeps well
- is alert when awake
- is gaining weight

If you're worried that your baby isn't getting enough to eat, call your doctor.

How Can I Increase My Milk Supply?

Your milk supply depends on how often you nurse or pump your breasts. The more you breastfeed or pump, the more milk your body makes. So, if you seem to be producing less milk than usual, nurse your baby more often. You also can pump after nursing to help stimulate more milk production.

Some things, like stress, illness, and some medicines, can temporarily lower your supply. But drinking plenty of water and eating nutritious foods can help. Also try to take some time for yourself each day, even if it's only for 15–30 minutes.

If your baby is younger than 6 months old and you're away from each other for long stretches during the day, pump or hand express every 3 hours to maintain your supply.

If your milk supply still seems low and you're concerned, talk to your doctor or a lactation consultant.

If I Wait to Nurse, Will My Milk Supply Increase?

Actually, no — it's the opposite. Waiting too long to nurse or pump can slowly reduce your milk supply. The more you delay nursing or pumping, the less milk your body will make. That's because overfilled (engorged) breasts send a signal to your brain that you need to make less milk.

I'm Producing Too Much Milk. What Can I Do?

Some women may feel like they don't have enough milk, while others may feel like they make too much. Some mothers' bodies just make more milk than their babies need. Others overstimulate their breasts by pumping or expressing milk between feedings.

If you feel like you have too much milk, here are some ideas:

- **Alternate the breast that you start each feeding with.** Let your baby stay at the first breast until either the breast is very soft or your baby is full. If your baby is not satisfied with the first breast, offer the second breast.
- **Try nursing on only one breast at each feeding, if possible.** Over time, you may notice your milk supply and "let-down reflex" (the milk ejection reflex) get easier to handle.
- **If expressing or pumping to relieve discomfort,** remove just enough to feel comfortable but don't empty the breast completely.

If you've tried these things and you still have problems with too much milk, talk to your doctor or lactation consultant.

My Baby Nurses on Just One Breast. Will This Hurt My Supply?

Some babies will be satisfied after nursing from only one breast. Others might prefer one breast over the other. If your baby has only fed from one breast and you are comfortable at the end of a feeding, you don't need to pump. But if either breast is still full and uncomfortable, pump or hand express to comfort.

To keep up your milk supply in both breasts (and to prevent painful engorgement), it's best to alternate breasts, whether in the same feeding session or between different sessions. Remember to keep your baby on the first breast until it's soft, and then move your baby to the second breast. This ensures that your little one gets the hindmilk, which is creamier and has more calories than the foremilk, which comes at the beginning of a feeding.

My Baby Is Sleeping Longer At Night. Will This Hurt My Supply?

When babies reach their birth weight and can sleep for longer stretches at night, the time between nighttime feedings gradually lengthens.

Letting your baby sleep for longer periods during the night won't hurt your breastfeeding efforts. Your growing baby can take in more milk during the day — and that, in turn, means longer stretches of sleep at night. Your milk supply will adjust to the new routine.

If you wake during the night with full breasts and a sleeping baby, consider expressing or pumping for comfort to help your body adjust to the new schedule.

If you follow your baby's cues and spread out the feedings, your milk supply should keep up with your baby's needs.

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