



Low Milk Supply with an Older Baby

Over time, some Mom's start feeling like they are not producing enough milk to satisfy their baby's needs. This may truly be the case, but frequently Mom's get a false sense of dwindling milk supply due to a variety of factors to be discussed below. These concerns need to be sorted out quickly so that you aren't tempted to supplement with formula unnecessarily, which can cause your milk supply to truly spiral downward.

If it is determined that your milk supply truly is decreasing, it is often due to the following:

- Mom is pumping regularly upon returning to work, which stimulates milk supply less effectively than your baby.
- Your baby is sleeping for longer periods at night, and thus milk is removed from the breasts fewer times each day.
- Your baby is given solids *before* a nursing session, which decreases your baby's desire to completely empty the breasts. Over time, your supply will decrease.
- Mom starts taking birth control pills with estrogen.
- Mom goes on a weight reduction diet, losing more than 5 pounds in a month.

If you are concerned about your milk supply, consider the following:

- Most nursing babies can increase your milk supply better than a pump can. If your baby acts hungry, nurse more often.
- Older babies may complete a feeding in as little as 3-5 minutes. This efficiency is sometimes interpreted as too little milk. If your baby is satisfied and gaining, this is normal!
- Older babies might nurse less frequently - every 3-5 hours rather than every 2-3 hours.
- If your baby is easily distracted, nurse in a quiet place. Some babies nurse better when they are drowsy, so consider waking your baby at the end of a nap to nurse.
- Your breasts may not feel as full before feedings later on as your breasts become more accustomed to nursing and the swelling decreases. You may also be less aware of a let down.
- Sporadic pumping can give you a false representation of your overall milk supply.

In preparation for returning to work, many Moms start pumping more often when their baby is about 1 month old. Sometimes you might pump less volume than you expected and worry that your overall supply is dwindling. There are, however, many factors to consider when you interpret this situation.

- Breast milk is not produced at the same rate through out a 24 hour period of time. More milk is produced in the morning than in the afternoon. Thus the volume you pump at one time of the day can be very different than another time of day, but the overall production is likely fine.
- You need to take into account how recently milk was removed from your breasts when interpreting the adequacy of a pumped volume. Most babies will take around 1 ounce per hour, so if it's been 3 hours since milk was last removed from both breasts, you'll likely pump around 3 ounces.

Ways to keep your supply up when you return to work:

It doesn't matter what time of the day your baby receives nourishment.

- Nurse more frequently when you are with your baby, such as in the evenings, early mornings and on weekends. Some babies naturally convert to a schedule of demanding more feedings at those times so that you won't need to produce as much milk during the day while at work.
- Add a middle of the night or early morning feeding to increase your baby's intake and to stimulate your milk supply. If you keep the lights off and don't talk, your baby will usually nurse well from both breasts and return to sleep. Another option is to pump in the middle of the night, to maintain your supply.
- Nurse your baby at the day care before leaving for work and again when you return to pick your baby up, before heading for home. This will decrease the amount of time that your breasts go without stimulation from your baby.

Advice about pumping:

- Worrying about pumping enough milk will not help! Do your best and accept it!
- More frequent pumping will increase your milk supply better than longer pumping sessions.
Example: It's better to do three 10 minute pumpings rather than two 15 minute pumpings.
- Pump at home only if you are separated from your baby. If you do pump at home, wait for 30 minutes after nursing to allow your breasts to refill.
- Squeeze your breasts during pumping to help express the milk. Rotate your hand all the way around the breast tissue.
- If you are exclusively pumping, ie only pumping and bottle feeding the expressed milk rather than nursing, the Pump In Style may not stimulate your supply enough. You may need to consider a hospital grade pump designed for this degree of pumping, such as the Lactina or Symphony.
- If you need to increase your supply for a growth spurt or to recover a dwindling supply, you can try "Power Pumping:" Pump 12 min. - break 12 min. - pump 12 min. - break 12 min. - pump 12 min.
Do this every morning or several times per week until your supply has increased.

Starting Solids

- Breast milk is all the nourishment your baby needs until 6 months of age. There are very few reasons to start solids before then. Introducing solids earlier than this may decrease your baby's intake of precious breast milk.
- Always offer the breast before food when you are at home with your baby. At day care, do the opposite. Have your day care provider offer food before the expressed breast milk. Consider having her give your baby the milk in a sippy cup rather than a bottle. Your baby may take less of the milk this way while at day care.
- Mix your baby's iron fortified dry infant cereal with vitamin C fortified juice instead of breast milk. This saves the breast milk for other feedings, and the vitamin C in the juice helps the iron in the cereal absorb into your baby's tummy.

Other Considerations

If all else fails, there are **medications** that might help increase your milk supply. There are no scientific studies to prove that they are beneficial, but there are many stories of success with their use.

Also keep in mind that **estrogen in birth control pills** might decrease your milk supply. You may need to consider a different form of birth control.