

Building a Milk Supply without Baby

There are ways you can build and maintain your milk supply if you are apart from your baby. Begin pumping and/or hand expression of your breasts within 2 hours of birth – (or as soon as you are able). Early stimulation will increase the hormones needed to develop a good milk supply. It is normal to get little to no milk initially. With regular stimulation, the amount will increase. It is not unusual for one breast to produce more milk. The following information is important for developing your milk supply:

Ensure the Correct Set-Up and Fit

- Make sure the breast shields fit correctly. If the size is too small or large, you may feel sore and you will not get as much milk. Over time, some need to change flange sizes for a correct, comfortable fit.
- Set the pump suction to the highest level that is comfortable. If it “pinches”, the suction may be too high. Too much suction causes trauma, pain, and decreases the amount of milk.

Develop a Pumping Schedule/ Routine

- Sit in a comfortable chair with back support, have something to drink nearby.
- Before and during your pumping sessions, use breast massage.
- Pump 8-12 times per day. Pump both breasts at the same time for a minimum of 15 minutes.
- Pumpings should be no further than 4 hours apart. Manual hand expression and breast massage can result in a greater milk supply.
- Once your milk supply is established (typically after 14 days), you can vary your schedule to allow a longer sleep stretch at night. Try to maintain 8 pumping sessions per day.
- Tracking your pumping during these first weeks can be helpful for tracking supply. Paper pumping logs can be requested through Lactation or found in several different online applications.
- Warm compressions or a warm shower before pumping can enhance your milk letdown. Warming your breast shields can also help.
- Use relaxation and/or guided imagery techniques during pumping.

Closeness to Your Baby is Important

- Make sure you spend time with your new baby. Do skin-to-skin contact (kangaroo care) as often as you are able. This has been shown to increase hormone levels to make milk.
- When possible, pump at your baby’s bedside. Studies show that you may make more milk when you are able to pump close to your baby(ies).
- If you are not pumping at your baby’s bedside, some find looking at a picture or thinking of your baby helpful. Others find distraction to be more helpful.

Take Care of Yourself

- Positive emotions help milk flow. Talk to your nurse or lactation consultant if you have concerns about how things are going.
- Make sure you get enough to eat and drink.
- Rest has been shown to increase milk supply. Try to nap in the day as you are able. Use strategies to support restful sleep at night despite pumping, such as adjusting your night sleep schedule, using a partner or family to help, or placing a cooler at the bedside for milk.

If you have any questions or would like help, ask your nurse or lactation consultant, or call the Breastfeeding Helpline at 608-417-6547, or 1-800-261-4449.



Making Milk When Baby is Not Nursing

The first two weeks are the MOST important time for establishing a milk supply.

Sometimes health issues prevent being able to put baby to breast. In these cases, hand expression and a breast pump should be used.

HOW IT WORKS: After delivery of your baby and placenta, the hormones of pregnancy drop dramatically and the milk making hormones are given the chance to come in and take over. These two important hormones are called prolactin and oxytocin. Your body is most open to and efficient at using these in the first few weeks.

Prolactin is the hormone that MAKES milk.

It is very important to increase your prolactin levels soon as you can after delivery and in the first two weeks to maximize long-term milk supply.

Oxytocin is the hormone that MOVES milk.

It is the hormone responsible for the “let down” of milk. Without it, the milk will sit in the breast. This sends a message to the brain and that there is no baby to feed and milk production is not needed.

How do I increase my hormone levels?

- Skin-to-skin time with your baby
- Frequent hand expression
- Nipple stimulation
- Frequent pumping
- Hearing, seeing, and touching your baby
- Rest and taking care of yourself