



# Low breastmilk supply

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## Low breastmilk supply is when your body is not making enough breastmilk for your baby's needs.

You might worry about your milk supply, especially in the early stages of breastfeeding. Some people might stop breastfeeding because they think they don't have enough milk. But most of the time your body is making enough milk for your baby.

If you have low milk supply it is usually for a short time. You can get help to improve your supply. You can talk to:

- your maternal and child health nurse
- a lactation consultant
- the Australian Breastfeeding Association
- your local doctor.

These are some common reasons why you might think your milk supply is low.

### “My baby feeds too often”

Breastfeeding your baby often helps your milk supply. Babies usually feed about 8 to 12 times in 24 hours. When you start to breastfeed your baby might be unsettled, but this does not always mean you have low milk supply.

You can read our factsheet about starting to breastfeeding: [Breastfeeding: Getting started.](#)

### “My breasts are feeling softer now”

Your breasts might start feeling softer and not as full after 3 to 12 weeks. Your milk supply changes to meet your baby's needs. If your baby keeps feeding well, your breasts should make enough milk.

### “My baby has suddenly started to feed more frequently”

Your baby might feed more when they want some more milk or are having a growth spurt.

When your baby feeds more over a couple of days your body will start to make more milk.

### “My baby only feeds for a short time”

After two or three months your baby will start to feed more quickly. Your baby is probably still getting enough milk. You don't need to worry as long as your baby continues to grow. Talk to your Maternal and Child Health Nurse or doctor if you are worried.

## How do you know if your baby is getting enough milk?

When your baby is one week, they usually:

- wake for feeds by themselves
- settle between most feeds
- have at least 6 to 8 soaked nappies in 24 hours if you are using cloth nappies.
- have at least 4 to 5 heavy nappies in 24 hours if you are using disposable nappies.
- do a soft yellow stool or poo at least once a day.

After your baby is two weeks old they should be back to their birth weight. They will start gaining about 150 grams or more every week for the first three months.

## Why might you have low milk supply?

If you have low milk supply it may be because your baby:

- is not attaching well to your breast for feeding. This can also cause nipple pain and damage.
- does not feed often enough. Babies usually feed about 8 to 12 times in 24 hours.
- is not feeding effectively at your breast.

You might have low milk supply because of other changes:

- you started using infant formula instead of breastfeeding
- you recently had mastitis.

You might have low milk supply because you smoke cigarettes.

Some medicine can change your milk supply:

- contraception pills that have oestrogen in them
- over-the-counter and herbal medicine, like cold and flu tablets.

## How can you help your milk supply?

You can help increase your milk supply with frequent feeding and expressing your breasts. When you are breastfeeding or expressing, you can compress or massage your breasts to help your milk flow.

### Hold your baby skin-to-skin

You can hold your baby skin-to-skin when you are feeding. This is when your baby is only wearing a nappy so there is direct skin contact between you and your baby.

Skin-to-skin will help:

- keep your baby awake
- your body release hormones that help make breastmilk.

## Feeding

You should breastfeed frequently, about every 2 or 3 hours. This means you will feed your baby 8 to 12 times in 24 hours.

You might need to wake and encourage your baby for some feeds.

Sometimes when you are feeding you could offer each breast twice to your baby. This is sometimes called 'switch feeding'.

When your baby is getting tired or not swallowing as much, take your baby off that breast and switch to the other breast. Then switch again until your baby has had a feed from each breast twice. This helps your baby get more milk from your breast more efficiently. This will not be something that you will do for a long time, just while you are getting your milk supply up.

Make sure your baby is attaching to your breast the best they can and that your baby is both sucking and swallowing, not just falling asleep while at your breast.

You can ask for help with this.

## Expressing

If your baby is sleepy at the breast and not feeding well, you might need to stop that feed and express from each breast twice instead.

For example, you could express for five minutes on the left side, five minutes on the right side and then do them both again. Then use your expressed breastmilk to feed your baby.

You can express after breastfeeding some or most of the time. This helps to stimulate your breasts and make sure your breasts are well drained. This helps increase your milk supply.

Often it takes about one hour to feed and express. Then you and your baby can rest between feeds.

## Infant formula

If you need to give your baby extra milk, you should use your expressed breastmilk separately and always before any infant formula. Get advice from a lactation consultant or other health professional before using infant formula.

## Medicine

Some people might use prescription medicine to help increase milk supply. Talk to your doctor about whether medicine will help you.

## You might not be able to get a full breastmilk supply

Not everyone can get a full breastmilk supply. You might have:

- a hormonal or medical condition
- had a premature baby
- unusual breast shape
- had breast surgery, like a breast reduction.

If you think something is affecting your milk supply, talk to your doctor, midwife or lactation consultant. They can help you work out the best way to feed your baby.

Even if you cannot get a full milk supply, any breastmilk you give your baby is important.

## Who can you ask for help?

You can ask for help with feeding and expressing. You can ask:

- a lactation consultant
- your maternal and child health nurse
- another health care professional who understands breastfeeding.

## Family Violence Support

### 1800 Respect National Helpline

Support for people impacted by sexual assault, domestic or family violence and abuse.

You can call any time of day or night.

1800 737 732

[1800respect.org.au](http://1800respect.org.au)

## Do you need an interpreter?



Interpreter

If you need an interpreter, you can ask for one.

## For more information

### Victorian Maternal & Child Health Line

You can call any time of day or night.

13 22 29

### Australian Breastfeeding Association

Breastfeeding Helpline

1800 686 268

[breastfeeding.asn.au](http://breastfeeding.asn.au)

### The Women's website

You can find breastfeeding information and factsheets on our website: [thewomens.org.au/health-information/breastfeeding](http://thewomens.org.au/health-information/breastfeeding)

## Related fact sheets

- *Breastfeeding: Getting started*
- *Expressing breast milk*
- *Domperidone for increasing milk supply*

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