

Helping your breastfed baby to get all the milk they need



Building your milk supply

How can I increase my milk supply?

Your body makes milk based on how often it's removed, so regular and effective feeding or expressing is key.

The first 8 steps are helpful for every breastfeeding parent and baby.

If needed, a midwife or feeding specialist may also suggest steps 9–16 to give your milk supply an extra boost.

Feeding your baby: simple tips

1. Get a good latch

A deep, comfortable latch helps your baby feed well and your body make more milk. Look for:

- A wide open mouth
- Chin touching your breast
- Head slightly tilted back and the nose free from the breast
- Baby's body close, with head, neck, and body in a straight line
- Baby's cheeks should be full – not sucking in.

2. Be sure baby is actively swallowing

You should see or hear your baby swallowing, especially once your milk comes in around **day 3-4**.

Watch for rhythmical, deep jaw dropping movements and little pauses.

When you are making colostrum, your baby should be swallowing every 3-4 sucks. Once your milk comes in (around day 3-4), we would expect your baby to be swallowing with every 1-2 sucks. If your baby is mostly doing light, fluttery sucks with very little swallowing, they are not removing much milk.

If you are struggling to spot the swallows, a midwife, maternity support worker or health visitor can help teach you what to look for.

3. Feed often

Your baby will usually feed 8–12 times every 24 hours.

Feeding often helps your milk supply grow. Watch for early feeding cues like lip-smacking, hand-sucking, or turning their head and try not to wait until they're crying.

4. Offer both breasts

Let your baby finish the first breast, then offer the second. This helps ensure they get enough milk and that your milk supply increases in both breasts.

Don't worry if they don't always want to feed off both breasts though, sometimes your baby may just want a snack or a comfort feed.

5. Keep feeding relaxed

If feeding feels stressful, pause and reset.

Cuddle your baby, take deep breaths, or ask someone to hold them while you take a moment.

A calm environment helps your body release oxytocin, the hormone that helps milk flow.

6. Wait on dummies

Try not to use a dummy in the first 6 weeks, it can mask hunger signs and reduce chances for your baby to feed and build your milk supply.

7. Skin-to-skin works wonders

Cuddling your baby skin-to-skin boosts feeding instincts and helps your milk-making hormones. It's also a lovely way to bond.

8. Keep your baby close

Having your baby close to you helps them feel safe and calm.

They can smell, taste, and feel you, which helps them know when it's time to feed and makes it easier for you to notice their hunger cues.

Staying close also helps your baby's brain grow and develop by keeping their stress low and their 'love hormones' high. It's one of the simplest and most powerful things you can do.

Slings, baby carriers, or wraps are great hands-free ways to keep your baby close during the day. Please note – it is not recommended to feed your baby while in a sling or carrier as this does not allow the baby to be positioned correctly. Always check that you are babywearing safely using the T.I.C.K.S Rule – visit <https://babyslingsafety.co.uk/ticks.pdf>

Extra support for helping your baby get more of your milk (if advised)

9. Try breast compressions

While feeding or pumping, gently squeeze your breast to help the milk keep flowing. This keeps your baby interested and helps them get more of the rich, fatty milk. Move your hand around the breast and repeat. Be firm but gentle.

10. Switch feeding

When your baby starts swallowing less frequently and is sleepy at the breast, switch to the other side to keep them actively feeding.

You can switch back and forth a few times during one feed to help them get more milk.

11. Expressing milk

If your baby isn't feeding well yet, or you're working on boosting your supply, try expressing 8–12 times in 24 hours. This may feel a lot, particularly when you are tired and/or in pain, but stimulating frequently every day in the first couple of weeks is crucial in setting up your milk supply.

Don't go longer than 4–5 hours between sessions, and make sure you express at least once between 1–5 a.m., that's when your milk-making hormone is highest.

Always use the highest setting on the pump that you can tolerate without it being painful, and it's really important you make sure the breast shield (flange) size is correct.

Don't worry if you don't express the same amount at each feed as milk levels fluctuate throughout the day.

If your milk supply is on the lower side, express until the milk stops spraying and then for an additional 5-10 minutes to stimulate another let-down.

12. Create a calm space

Before you pump, take a few minutes to relax. Cuddle your baby, get cosy and warm, and try playing some relaxing music. Studies show that listening to calming music while breastfeeding/expressing can actually help increase the volume and fat-content of your milk.

If watching the bottles makes you anxious, try covering them with socks so you're not focused on the amount. Remember, pumping is a special way to provide your baby with your amazing milk, every drop counts.

13. Use hands-on pumping

Massage and compress your breasts while pumping to help get more milk and increase the fat content. You may also find a warm flannel on your breast helps.

14. Express after feeding

Try expressing for 10 minutes after each feed, even if not much milk comes out. It tells your body to make more for next time.

15. Full pump session

If your baby is not feeding effectively at the breast, do a full session by pumping for 20 minutes on each side, or use a double pump.

Aim for 8-12 sessions in 24 hours with one session between 1-5am (see point 11).

16. Power pumping

Power pumping is a technique used to increase milk supply by acting like a baby that is cluster feeding (= feeding frequently for short periods, often seen during a growth spurt).

A common plan includes:

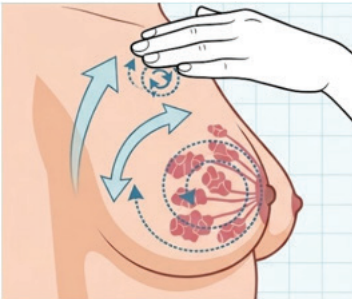
- Pump for 20 minutes
- Rest for 10 minutes (no pumping)
- Pump for 10 minutes
- Rest for 10 minutes
- Pump for 10 minutes.

Do this once a day, for 3 to 7 days in a row. Most parents see a change in milk supply in a few days.

17. Breast massage techniques

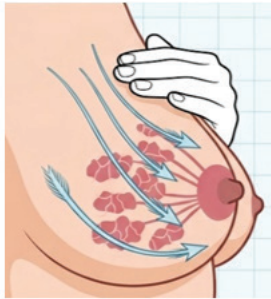
- Gentle breast massage can help your milk flow more easily.
- Breast massage should feel comfortable. Be gentle and stop if it hurts.
- The '**dangle massage**' (see below) uses gravity to help milk flow. Lean forwards and gently massage your breast. This can help trigger your let-down reflex, increase the amount of milk you express and help clear clogged milk ducts. You can also do this while expressing.
- Massaging your breasts while expressing can help you collect more milk. It may also increase the fat content of your milk and reduce the time you need to pump.
- While pumping, use a mix of gentle massage and breast squeezes (compressions).
- A hands-free bra can be helpful because it leaves both hands free for massage and breast compressions.

Different types of massage:



Stroking massage

Lightly stroke from the chest wall towards the nipple.



Circular massage

Gently massage in circular movements. Spiral inward towards the areola.



Dangle massage/shaking

Lean slightly forward. Gently massage and shake the breasts.

Illustration showing breast massage techniques.

Feeding plan

Number of pump sessions per 24h:

How much milk to top up with:

How many times a day:

Next re-weigh:

What to expect in the early days

Your baby may lose weight during the first three or four days and from day 5 we expect steady weight gain of at least 20g per day. They should regain their birth weight by the time they are 21 days old or sooner. After that, most breastfed babies gain an average 170 grams (6 ounces) per week.

By day 5 your baby will be feeding 8 -12 times in 24 hours. You can expect 5 – 6 really wet nappies per day plus a minimum of two bowel movements of at least as big as a £2 coin. The stool should be runny, yellow and no longer black or green. Around 6 weeks old they may poo less often and still gain weight well but until then, poo is a good way to check how much milk is going through.

Your baby's behaviour will tell you that they are satisfied and full. They will come off the breast spontaneously and will seem contented. This applies when the baby is being held, not being able to put the baby down, is not necessarily an indication of feeding issues.

Contact details and helplines

Establishing effective breastfeeding can take time and sometimes requires additional help and support.

If it is challenging for you, please ask for extra support.

The first few weeks can be the hardest. We have extended teams of maternity staff, health visitors, breastfeeding drop-ins and volunteers trained to help you reach your feeding goals.

Infant feeding team:

St Richard's, Chichester **07808 099829**

Worthing **07808 099816**

uhsussex.infantfeeding@nhs.net

**Royal Sussex County Hospital
and Princess Royal Hospital**

uhsussex.prhrschbreastfeedingteam@nhs.net

Community midwife contact numbers:

Royal Sussex County Hospital **01273 664794**

Princess Royal Hospital **01444 448608**

Worthing/ St Richards Hospital **01903 285269**

Health visiting teams

Brighton and Hove **01273 266000**

West Sussex **01273 242004**

Hampshire **Text – 07520 615720**

Free trained breastfeeding volunteer helplines

NCT breastfeeding counsellors

0300 330 0700

8:00 am to 12:00 am

National Breastfeeding Helpline

0300 100 0212

9:30 am to 9:30 pm

The ABM Breastfeeding Helpline

0300 330 5453

9:30 am to 10:30 pm

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