

## Information for breastfeeding families

# *Increasing breastmilk supply* *For a Baby in the NICU*



Frequent stimulation of the breasts, by breastfeeding or by using a breast pump, during the first few days and weeks, are essential to establish an abundant breastmilk supply.

### ***Get off to a good start***

Pumping 8 or more times per day notifies your breasts that they need to start producing milk. The pump takes the place of your baby if he were able to breastfeed. He would be feeding 8 or more times each day. Use a bi-lateral pump kit. This stimulates your milk supply better than pumping each breast individually.

We recommend that you use a hospital grade breast pump when you pump. It is the only type that is designed to start your milk supply when you are not breastfeeding yet.

Pump for about 15 minutes each time. When the milk stops flowing do some hand massage to remove the remaining milk. Rotate your hands around the breast to empty all areas.

### ***Pump regularly***

Continue to pump 8 or more times per day: that is about every 2-3 hours while you are awake. Your sessions do not have to be on a schedule, pump whenever you can. If you miss a session, pump more often later in the day. If you can, pump even more: 10-12 times especially during the first 1-2 weeks.

When you visit your baby, use the breast pumps in the NICU so you won't miss a session. Just bring your own kit with you.

### ***Avoid these things that are known to reduce breastmilk supply***

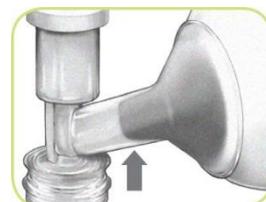
- Smoking
- Caffeine
- Birth control pills and injections
- Decongestants, antihistamines
- Severe weight loss diets
- Mints, parsley, sage (excessive amounts)

### ***Make sure that your flange fits***

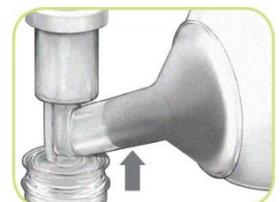
You will know it fits if:

- Your nipple stretches easily in the flange
  - Only the nipple is pulled into the flange, none of the areola
  - Your breast empties all over with no lumps or unemptied pockets of milk
  - There is gentle motion of your breast tissue outside the flange during each suction cycle
  - There is no pain, only a tugging sensation
- There is no compression ring or blanched skin around the areola.

Watch what happens during a pumping session. Your nipple size may change during a pumping session, or over the weeks that you use a breast pump. There are larger flanges sizes available if you find that yours is too tight.



**Good Fit**  
Space seen around nipple.



**Too Tight**  
Nipple rubbing along tunnel.

## Herbs, foods and medications

- Eat a bowl of cooked oatmeal daily
- Brewer's yeast 3 T daily, increase by ½ teaspoon daily until results are seen (or equivalent in capsules)
- Lactation cookies. By searching the internet and you will find sources for packaged cookies and recipes to make your own.

*Discuss the following with your infant's neonatologist prior to using*

- Fenugreek preparations help many women increase supply. Doses of 3-5 capsules (580-610 mg), three times per day are commonly recommended. *Avoid fenugreek if you are diabetic, hypoglycemic, asthmatic or allergic to peanuts or other legumes.* Fenugreek is available at most vitamin shops or health food stores. Taken as directed, it may cause a faint maple body odor. That is to be expected and means that the herb is doing it's job. You can find much information by doing an internet search.
- Blessed thistle or other herbs or beverages such as Mother's Milk Tea taken as directed on package. A reliable source of herbs and herbal blends is MotherLove Herbals and Gaia Herbs.
- Prescription medications sometimes help increase milk supply. Metaclopramide (Reglan) has been used with limited success. Domperidone has been used with more success but is not available in the United States.



## Pump like a baby feeds

At the beginning of your pumping session, start your pump on low suction and fast cycles. Your baby will start sucking fast and light. Gradually turn the suction up over the first few minutes. Once the milk begins to flow (that means your let-down reflex has started) and this is the time that your baby would be sucking slow and deep. Turn your pump cycling down and continue increasing the suction until it begins to pinch. Then turn it back a bit. That will be the right suction level for you. Don't turn the suction beyond when it begins to feel uncomfortable. That can collapse your milk ducts and you will get less milk. There are some breast pumps that do these adjustments automatically.

## Massage your breasts while pumping

Massage can make a tremendous difference in how much milk you obtain while pumping. For detailed instructions on how to do breast massage while pumping, view the video <http://newborns.stanford.edu/Breastfeeding/MaxProduction.html>. Massage until the milk stops flowing, then compress or gently squeeze the breast to remove even more. To have one hand free while pumping, you can use one hand to hold both flanges, wear a tight camisole or purchase a special bustier.



## ***Stimulate your let-down reflex***

Let-down is when the milk is flowing easily. Stress is a major problem for your let-down reflex and is common, of course, among NICU mothers. Here are some suggestions to help

- ✓ Hold your baby skin-to-skin
- ✓ Massage your breasts
- ✓ Look at a picture of your baby, smell baby smells, hold a baby toy or think of holding your baby
- ✓ Relax your shoulders, do neck rolls
- ✓ Use visualization; think about rivers of breastmilk or think of a peaceful place
- ✓ Listen to relaxing music, sounds of ocean waves or recorded sounds of your baby
- ✓ Eat and drink something while pumping
- ✓ Pump prior to a stressful event
- ✓ Don't watch the collection bottles
- ✓ Get a back massage
- ✓ Drink plenty of fluids
- ✓ Caffeine, smoking and alcohol inhibit the let-down reflex
- ✓ Wear a Rice Sock around your neck or lay it over your breasts while pumping.

## ***What is a Rice Sock?***

Fill a clean gym sock with uncooked rice and tie it shut. Some people add pleasant smells such as lavender or chamomile to aid in relaxation. Heat it in the microwave for a minute or two (make sure it does not get too hot) and wear it around your neck or lay over your breasts. This type of product is available in stores also.



## ***Keep track of your milk in a log***

Keep track of your progress on a pumping log. It will tell you if you are pumping the expected amount or if you need to do more pumping to keep up an abundant breastmilk supply.

## ***Seek help from a Lactation Consultant***

Seek help from a knowledgeable nurse or lactation consultant in the NICU. Your needs are a bit different and they can give you advice based on your unique situation.

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## Sample Pumping Log with Daily Target Goals

Day	Date & time	Amount Pumped at each pumping session								Daily total	Target
Day of delivery											Drops
Day 1											Drops
Day 2											Drops
Day 3											25-75 ml 1-2.5 oz
Day 4											75-150 ml 2-3.6 oz
Day 5											150-225 ml 6-7 oz
Day 6											225-300 ml 7.5-12.5 oz
Day 7											300-375 ml 10-12.5 oz
Day 8											375-450 ml 12.5-15 oz
Day 9											450-525 ml 15-17.5 oz
Day 10											525-600 ml 17.5-20 oz
Day 11											600-650 ml 20-22 oz
Day 12											650-700 ml 22-23.5 oz
Day 13											700-750 ml 23.5-25 oz
Day 14											750 + ml 25+ oz