



ILCA's INSIDE TRACK

a resource for breastfeeding mothers

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Managing Your Milk Supply: Going with the Flow

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Congratulations on deciding to breastfeed! Many mothers are concerned about how much milk they will make. Knowing how your body makes milk can help you feel more in control of your milk supply. Be sure to ask your lactation consultant if you have any questions.

Getting Started—The Milk Comes In

After your baby is born, the hormones in your body will change. Your body will know it is time to make milk. Your body is designed to make a lot of milk. Here is an idea of what to expect:

- **At first** you will make a special fluid called colostrum that is important for your baby. Colostrum helps your baby's gut and immune system. Breastfeeding your baby soon after birth is best. Your baby will get the colostrum, and your body will get signals to make more milk.
- **After 2 to 3 days**, you will notice changes in your breasts. They may get warm and they will feel fuller. Some mothers feel too full during this time. It is best to feed your baby very frequently at this time—you will not feel too full, and your baby will help your body make just enough milk.
- **After just a few days**, you should not feel too full any more.

“Your body is designed to make a lot of milk.”

Making Enough Milk

Your body makes milk for two main reasons:

- 1 Your body makes milk because your baby's sucking on the nipple sends a signal to your brain. This signal tells your brain to make hormones. The hormones tell your body to make milk. The hormones also tell your body to release the milk that you have made.
- 2 Your body will make enough milk to replace the milk that the baby takes out of each breast. If more milk is taken out of one breast, then that breast will make more milk than the other breast. So sucking and emptying make more milk.

**Sucking → Signal → Brain →
Hormones → Breast → MILK!**

At first your body will make more milk than your baby needs. By 4-6 weeks you will make just enough milk. Your breasts may not feel as full as they did at first. As long as your baby is gaining enough weight, your body is making enough milk. Your lactation consultant can tell you if your baby is gaining enough weight.



Making More Milk

When babies need more milk, they will drink more at each feeding. They may also want to feed more often. Drinking more and feeding more often means more sucking and emptying. **More sucking and emptying will cause you to make more milk.** In some situations your lactation consultant may suggest you use a breast pump. A breast pump can help you make more milk by emptying your breasts more often. It is important to ask for help if you decide to use a pump. Your lactation consultant can help you decide how often and how much you should pump.

Making Less Milk

When babies need less milk, they may go longer between feeds and take less milk from the breast. If you give your baby something other than breast milk, your baby will need less milk from you. **The less milk your baby takes from you, the less milk your body will make.** If you are feeling too full after the first week, talk to your lactation consultant about what to do. If you are using a breast pump, be sure to tell your lactation consultant. She can help you decide if you need to pump less often or stop pumping.

How Much Milk Can a Breast Hold?

- Scientists have found that some mothers can store more milk in their breasts than others. In fact, some mothers **store more milk in one breast than in the other.** **“Breast size is *not related to how much milk you can store.*”** Breast size is *not related* to how much milk you can store.
- Mothers who can store a lot of milk in their breasts may not have to feed their babies as often as mothers who store less milk.
- Mothers who store *less* milk in their breasts may have to feed their babies *more often*.
- So, your friend's baby may feed less often than your baby, but that's okay. Both babies will get plenty of milk if the mothers feed the babies whenever the babies are hungry.

Did
You?
Know?

Only breast milk contains...

- *all* the nutrients that growing babies need.
- immune factors that work together to help a baby stay healthy and boost his immune system.
- enzymes to help a baby digest mother's milk.
- growth factors and hormones that help a baby develop and grow strong.
- specific antibodies against germs that a mother has been exposed to so a baby is protected from them.