

Relactation

Relactation is building a milk supply which has been reduced or dried up after weeks or months of not breastfeeding. Reasons for relactation may include formula intolerance, medical conditions, changes in work or home, or disappointment in early weaning.

Why do you want to relactate?

Relactation is not easy. It may or may not work for you. Women who relactate because of the emotional benefits of nursing generally feel more successful than those who focus on their milk supply. In a survey of women who attempted relactation, 75% felt it had been a positive experience.

Is it too late?

- The younger the baby, the more likely he will be willing to resume breastfeeding.
- Babies under 3 months old have the best success.
- Babies over 6 months old tend to be less willing.
- Babies who have previously breastfed are more willing to resume.

How long will it take?

- Commit 2 weeks to making breastfeeding your main concern.
- The amount of time it takes to relactate is about equal to how long it has been since breastfeeding stopped.
- About half of the women who successfully relactated had a full milk supply within a month. The others took over one month or offered formula also.

How should I start?

- Offer the breast for 20-30 minutes every 2-3 hours.
- Try to nurse on both sides.
- If baby is not willing to breastfeed often, use a double electric pump to express milk and stimulate milk production.
- Nurse before, after and between feedings for as long as the baby is willing - no matter how much formula is given.
- When the baby begins to breastfeed well, put ½ ounce less in each bottle. The next day decrease each bottle by another ½ ounce.

Will I be able to make enough milk?

How much milk mom produces will depend upon

1. The baby. How willing is he? Does he nurse well ?
2. Frequency and effectiveness of breast stimulation. Using a breast pump can stimulate milk production, but not as well as a baby at the breast. More effective + more often = more milk.
3. Mothers physical response to breast stimulation. Each woman's body is different.
4. How long mom has been nursing. Milk supply may build slowly or level out.
5. Is baby getting enough?
6. Keep track of how often and how long the baby breastfeeds.
7. Track the amount of formula or expressed breast milk being offered and how it was given.
8. How many wet diapers? Baby should have at least six.
9. Bowel movements get softer, lighter color, and have less odor as the amount of breast milk increases.
10. Have weekly weight and growth checks.

What about bottles?

Liquid flows from a bottle quickly and takes little effort from baby. Use nipples that have a slow flow. Avent and Munchkin nipples are good options. Some babies switch to the breast easily, while others need lots of encouragement. Use breastfeeding rather than a pacifier between feedings to comfort the baby.

Other changes moms may experience during relactation:

- Breasts may become more full and tender.
- Areolas may get darker.
- You may experience mood changes due to hormones.
- Menstrual patterns may change.
- Milk supply may decrease for a couple days before and at the start of menstrual periods. Tender breasts and mood changes are common at this time as well.

Baby gets a vote too:

Some babies love getting back to breastfeeding. Others don't. Nursing has good days and bad. Breastfeeding is a team sport. If you've tried these ideas and baby still isn't willing, pat yourself on the back and move on. Enjoy other opportunities to hold and cuddle your baby. Good Luck!

Ways to encourage baby to take the breast:

Times and Places to Try Breastfeeding

- when the baby is not too hungry or too sleepy
- when the baby is asleep or relaxed
- while walking
- in the bathtub
- in a darkened room
- in a place that is free of distractions for mother and baby
- while rocking in a rocking chair
- while soothing music is playing
- in a sling with skin-to-skin contact

Increase Touching

- Give the baby lots of skin-to-skin contact.
- Spend more time each day stroking and cuddling.
- Use a sling or baby carrier to keep baby close between feedings.
- Take baths together.
- Sleep together.

At the Breast

- Apply milk to the nipple and areola to encourage baby to latch on.
- Talk to the baby.
- Keep breastfeeding pleasant so baby will associate nursing with positive feelings.
- Be patient.
- Supplement at the breast.

