



Managing a High Milk Supply Feb., 2017

A high milk supply may sound desirable, however many mothers and babies struggle with breastfeeding problems as a result. Infant symptoms may include fussiness at the breast, gassiness, spitting up, and mucousy stools. Mothers can experience recurrent mastitis, plugs and chronic breast pain. Here are some tips to alleviate problems with a high milk supply:

Gradually decrease excessive pumping

Pumping in addition to breastfeeding to ease discomfort and reduce fullness will only continue to keep her supply high. In order to reduce excessive pumping, advise mom to pump just enough to relieve pressure or soften the breast slightly. Pumping to complete emptiness is a strong signal to the breast to increase the supply.

Reduce Herbal Supplements

Ask mom to stop supplements that increase the milk supply, such as fenugreek, blessed thistle, moringa leaf, shatavari, fennel, and Mothers' Milk Tea.

Breast Compression during Feeding

While the baby is nursing, Mom can cup the breast in her hand, applying firm pressure back into the chest wall. This may slow the flow of milk. This is particularly helpful for the first letdown, which is the heaviest and fastest. As the baby is able to cope with the flow and begins to relax, mom can reduce pressure on the breast, allowing the milk to flow freely. This is a temporary measure and isn't suggested for the entire feeding.

Change Breastfeeding Positions

Mothers can try a few different positions to make it easier for the baby to manage the fast milk flow. These include:

- Sit the baby in her lap, facing her by straddling her thigh.
- Side-lying.
- Lying back in a recliner so that the baby is over the breast rather than under it.

Nurse One Breast Per Feed

Nursing from 1 breast per feeding will allow the other breast to remain full for a few hours. The fullness should send a message to the breast to decrease its supply. She may need to pump slightly, just to comfort, on the full side until her body adjusts. This strategy should help decrease supply over a few days.

Shake the Breast

The fussiness and gassiness that occurs with a high supply is often due to the infant taking large volumes of watery, lower-fat milk during the first large let-down. [This is not a problem for mothers without an excessive supply.] Gently massaging and rolling the breast between two hands, followed by shaking the breast before nursing can help mix the milk so that the baby receives more fat at the beginning of the feeding.

Mothers Who Are Exclusively Pumping

Mothers are encouraged to stop pumping when sufficient milk is expressed. It may be tempting to keep pumping because milk is flowing but this will drive the supply higher.

Reducing the frequency and duration of pumping can help to drive down the supply. For example, if pumping every 3 hours, try to pump every 4 hours, and reduce the number of minutes pumping. Having a high supply can increase the risk of breast infection, so it is important to pump on a regular schedule.

Consider a visit with a Lactation Specialist

If the tips above are not sufficient to help bring down the supply, or if problems develop along the way such as plugged ducts, please seek advice from a lactation specialist.