

Increasing your milk supply by gradually decreasing supplement

For those families who are giving both breast and bottle, or who are giving some formula supplement by any other means, you can increase your milk supply by gradually decreasing the formula given. ***And, if you prefer, you can do this without doing any pumping at all.***

To do this, you need to **offer the bottle** (or cup, syringe, or spoon) ***first, before offering the breast.*** This is because of the way your decreased supply affects your baby's suckling style, and the way that suckling style affects your supply:

▪ *When a mother has plenty of milk*, the first milk is the fast flowing foremilk (skim milk), which meets the baby's thirst. When babies are thirsty, they want the milk to flow pretty fast, to meet that thirst. Then, after the baby has met thirst, the milk flow slows down, becoming creamier. Toward the end of a feeding, the baby is content to get smaller letdowns of creamier milk, and the baby often gets sleepier and sleepier.

▪ *However, for the mother whose supply is down*, the breast's milk flow slows down sooner than the baby expects, with the smaller and creamier letdowns coming while the baby is still thirsty. The baby is not ready for hindmilk yet, so the baby fusses or fidgets, and the mother decides to offer the supplement. But, because the baby stops nursing when the milk flow has only just begun to slow down, there is still plenty of milk in her milk glands (even though she can't feel it), and, so the breast doesn't get the extra message to increase production.

▪ *When you offer the supplement first, before* you offer the breast, you turn this around: The supplement meets the baby's initial thirst. Then, when the baby is only mildly hungry, but no longer thirsty, the baby will have more patience for the slower milk flow, will stay on the breast longer, for the later, creamier letdowns. This means that the baby removes more milk from your breasts and gets more calories from you, and it also means the baby empties your milk glands an extra time or two, which gives the glands the signal to increase supply further.

HOW TO DO THIS:

1. **To start**, *before* each breastfeeding, *offer just a little bit less* than the usual amount of supplement that you had been giving after a breast feeding. For example, if you have recently been giving 3-4 oz by bottle *after* breastfeeding, then start by offering 2 ½ to 3 ½ oz *before* breastfeeding.
2. By trial and error, you will find the amount of milk that it takes to just take the edge off the baby's hunger, to help the baby relax a bit before going to breast, but not enough to make the baby fall asleep before getting to the breast.
 - If the baby falls asleep too soon at the breast, then next time offer *less* by bottle.
 - But if the baby is still hungry after breastfeeding (so that one feeding is bottle-breast-bottle!), then next time *increase* the amount of supplement you give before breastfeeding that time of day.
3. You may find that before the morning nursings you can give a smaller amount of supplement (or none!), but that by afternoon/eve you have to use more supplement before the breast. That's ok!
4. As you find the right amount of supplement to offer first, and the baby is nursing better at the breast, you can then decrease the amount of supplement before each breastfeeding again by another ½ oz or so. As things are going well, keep decreasing the supplement every few days.
5. When you are down to offering less than an ounce of supplement before each breastfeeding, then after a day or two you can cut out the supplement completely. At that point the baby may want to breastfeed a little more often at first, usually for only a day or two.