

# Boosting Your Milk Supply

Written by [Laurel Haring](#) Sunday, July 27 2008 15:11

Want to boost your milk supply? You can do it on your own, without having to resort to superhuman measures, “mother’s milk miracle remedies,” or anything else. Increasing your breast-milk supply is as easy as relaxation, hydration/nutrition/medication, and stimulation.

## **1. Relaxation**

Easier said than done, I know. However, it’s more than just a good idea to take the time to relax – it’s vital for your health and well being, to say nothing of your milk supply. Learn to delegate. Learn to lower your standards. Learn to nap when the baby does. Look, does it really matter if it takes a day or two to fold that laundry? Will the health department haul you in if those dishes don’t get washed immediately? And I won’t even mention that if you’re working to earn a paycheck on top of caring for a baby and doing everything that needs to be done to run a household, you may just be a wee bit pressed for time.

## **2. Hydration/Nutrition/Medication**

Make every drop of liquid and every calorie count. If you drink a lot of caffeine (i.e., tea, coffee, or colas), now would be a good time to stop or at least cut back. Caffeine is a natural diuretic, so drinking caffeine (or eating it, in chocolate ... **gasp!**) you’ll be flushing away fluids that could be used to make breast milk.

You do not need to pound down glass after glass of water – that can be as bad as not drinking enough. Rather, drink “to thirst,” meaning listen to your body and drink as much as your body needs.

Eat food that’s rich ... in vitamins and protein and variety. It will help boost your milk supply and make you a healthier, stronger mom. A multivitamin or prenatal vitamin can help cover any minor dietary deficit, but you really need to fuel the machine if you’re going to have the energy you need to feed your baby.

You should clear all medications – and this includes herbal supplements – first with your health-care provider. “All-natural” products may sound good (what could be better than “all-natural,” after all?). However, keep in mind that arsenic, belladonna, and even e. coli are “all natural,” too. Nature can be dangerous (and gross).

Other medications can actually diminish your milk supply. It’s important that you tell your health-care provider that you are nursing. In fact, you can get in the habit of mentioning it during every visit to your pediatrician, general practitioner, ob/gyn, dentist,

ophthalmologist ... well, every doctor who may prescribe medication for you. And talk to your pharmacist if you plan to take an over-the-counter medication.

### 3. Stimulation

This is the biggie – the one thing you can do that will really make a huge difference. Remember that milk production is based on demand (stimulation). The more your breasts are stimulated, the more milk you will produce, and the opposite is just as true.

- **Take matters into your own hands.** Gently massaging your breasts, like suckling, is stimulation, and will help stimulate your breasts to produce more milk. Massage each breast with the flat part of your fingers, not your fingertips. Work in a spiral from the outer part of your breast, completely circling the breast before moving closer to the nipple for the next circles. Another technique is to slowly, gently stroke each breast from your body out toward the nipple; this will help you relax, which will help your brain release oxytocin, which in turn triggers the letdown reflex. After performing one or the other – or both – of these techniques, lean forward, gently shake your breasts, and let gravity do its work.
- **Nurse often and offer both breasts at each feeding.** You can also switch from one breast to the other throughout the nursing session so that each breast gets plenty of stimulation.
- **Ban the binky and the bottle.** Babies need to suck, so why not feed your baby when she needs to suck? If her need to suck is being satisfied by a pacifier, then you can bet that your breasts aren't getting the stimulation they need to produce milk. Believe it or not, babies don't absolutely need pacifiers. Yes, I know that some babies really do seem to need them; however, if you want to boost your supply, booting binky, even temporarily, will help. If you want or need to provide supplemental feedings, they can be offered from a cup, a spoon, or a supplemental feeder.
- **Double up your feedings.** To do this, nurse your baby, and when he's done, see if you can coax out any air bubbles. Once baby has burped, he'll have room for more milk; so nurse him for a little bit longer and on both breasts, if he's willing.
- **Think baby thoughts.** Before nursing and during nursing, focus on your baby ... the way she looks, the way her hair and skin feel, that wonderful baby smell. Focusing on your baby will help you relax, which will help encourage your letdown reflex.
- **Put baby in charge.** Let your baby nurse for as long as he wants, rather than trying to impose a time limit on his nursing.

Having enough milk for your baby is easily accomplished if you take these steps: relax; keep a close eye on what you eat, drink, or take (i.e., medication, vitamins, and

supplements); and make sure that your breasts are getting the message to produce more milk. If you've tried everything and still are unsure, contact your pediatrician, hospital, or birthing center for a referral to a certified lactation consultant or look in your yellow pages or on the Web for a local breastfeeding support group, like [La Leche League](#).

*Laurel Haring is a writer and editor. She and her family live in Wilmington, Delaware. While she was nursing her second child, Laurel made a deal with herself: she could switch to drinking her favorite beverage, diet Coke, only after she'd had eight 8-ounce glasses of water. Those three years of nursing were the best-hydrated years of her life!*

<http://www.typeamom.net/boosting-your-milk-supply.html>