

# Set Your Mind at Ease About Your Milk Supply

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While you're a nursing mother, there may be times when you might be concerned that your milk supply is running low. As long as your baby is gaining weight well and has plenty of wet diapers and bowel movements, your milk supply is just fine. Because forewarned is forearmed, learn about some of the false alarms that could lead you to believe that your supply is running low. As you read in the lead-in to this article, babies that are gaining weight and having plenty of wet and dirty diapers are getting all the milk they need from nursing. But because parenthood in general, and nursing in particular, are inexact sciences, you may find yourself wondering – or worrying – if you're producing enough milk for your baby

Here are some situations that might make you think twice about your milk supply and reasons why you don't need to worry.

## **You observe that your baby is ...**

- **Nursing a lot** – Milk production is a supply and demand situation. If your baby is nursing a lot, then her demand will stimulate increased production. Frequent nursing is not necessarily an indicator that your milk supply is running low. (Read the next topic.)
- **Hungry again soon after nursing** – Breast milk is very easy to digest and so passes through a baby's system much faster than formula would. Formula takes quite a bit longer to break down, but breast milk has exactly what a baby needs – and nothing else.

There are two kinds of breast milk (not counting colostrum). The first milk the baby receives during a nursing session is called the foremilk, and it's thin, watery, and plentiful. As the baby continues to nurse at the same breast, the milk becomes higher in fat and lower in volume. It's important that your baby receive the right balance of fluid (foremilk) and calories (hindmilk). When you allow him to decide when he's had enough at the first breast, you'll know that he's received the right balance.

- **Suddenly nursing more often or for longer periods of time** – Welcome to the wonderful world of growth spurts! Often a baby who has switched into high gear is in fact gearing up for a period of rapid growth (usually around two or three weeks, six weeks, and three months of age). Newborns seem to get it together after a week or two after their birth, and their feeding demands will pick up to keep pace with their needs.

- **Suddenly nursing more quickly** – Practice makes perfect, and it could be that your baby has become super-efficient at nursing.
- **Fussy** – There are more reasons for a baby to be fussy than there are fingers and toes on her little body. It could be a gas bubble. It could be that she's too warm or is being pinched by her diaper or would really like a nap. Sometimes it's nature's way to make sure that your baby is being fed as often as she needs to be. (Refer to "Hungry again soon after nursing." Your baby might not be getting enough hindmilk.)

Sometimes fussiness is just grumbling. At my house, my first son, my husband, and I went through the baby's "arsenic hour" every day around dinnertime. Once my husband and I learned that our baby was just being crabby, we learned not to take it personally.

- **Taking a bottle after nursing** – Some babies just like to suck, whether it's at your breast or on a finger, pacifier, or bottle.

### ***About the Author***

*Laurel Haring is a writer. She lives with her family in Wilmington, Delaware, and posts semi-regularly to her blog, [Let Me Say This About That.](#)*

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