

Galactagogues Foods, Herbs, and other Ways to Increase Breast Milk Production

If you Google ways to increase your breast milk supply, you'll find a wide range of advice, not all of it healthy. Ideas range from prescription medicines to drinking Gatorade, and most of them are poor choices. Many advocate increasing refined sugar intake through sugary drinks and fruit juices.

If your breast milk supply is low, the first two things you need to ask yourself is, "Are you getting enough to eat?" and "Are you drinking enough water?" While sugar can help increase milk supply, extra sugar can also lead to diaper rashes. Instead of fruit juices or refined foods, reach for fruit and water first. Here are four simple, healthy ways to increase your breast milk supply.

Hydration

Proper hydration is the number one key to keeping a good milk supply flowing. Drinks like Gatorade, with all of their artificial flavors, colorings, and additives, actually hinder your milk supply. A good rule of thumb is to drink an 8-oz glass of water every time you breastfeed and carry around a water bottle to sip on throughout the day. Make sure most of what you drink is water, but if the idea of plain water is unappealing, other options do exist.

Other good sources for hydration include coconut water and fruit infusions. Besides tasting great, coconut water is a great source of minerals and electrolytes. Fruit infusions are flavored waters that have traces of vitamins and minerals; they are easy to make at home. Although it may be easier said than done for some, try to avoid caffeinated beverages. If you

do drink coffee or tea, make sure to drink extra water.

On the other hand, too much water in the system can inhibit breast milk production. Stay hydrated, but don't keep adding fluids to the body if hydration is not the problem.

Breast Pumping

While not the first go-to for many mothers, pumping, if done in addition to nursing, can be a highly effective way to increase supply. Tricks include pumping after each nursing session, adding an extra pumping session or two during the day, cluster pumping, power pumping, and nursing vacations.

Cluster pumping is when you nurse and pump every half hour or hour for a couple of hours.

Power pumping is like interval training for breastfeeding. Plan to do this for a couple of days. Pick an hour where you can sit and relax. Pump for twenty minutes, rest for ten, pump again for ten, rest for ten, then pump again for ten minutes.

Nursing vacations include spending two to three days, trying to relax and nurse and pump as often as possible.

All of these techniques help increase supply by mimicking the increased demand from a baby during a growth spurt. Simply put, increased demand for milk will increase the supply.

Natural Galactagogues

Because breast milk production is maintained by local feedback mechanisms (autocrine control), more frequent and more thorough emptying of the breast typically results in an increase in supply. A galactagogue is a substance that promotes lactation in humans and other animals. Natural galactagogues include foods, herbs, teas, and nutritional supplements. If the breast milk supply is low, even after

breast pumping, it may be time to look at galactagogues, but do consider a thorough evaluation with a natural health care practitioner who is familiar with maternal health issues. Maternal hypothyroidism is a common cause of low breast milk production, and medications can also reduce milk as well.

Healthy Foods

Oatmeal is probably the most well-known choice of food for increasing breast milk production. If you want to try oatmeal, skip the instant ready packs and choose fruit instead of refined sugars to sweeten it. A well-balanced diet consisting of 80% fresh produce is the foundation for optimal health, and for most moms, adding more fresh, raw, organic produce to the diet may be enough to stimulate milk production. Other favorites of nursing mothers include carrots, seaweed soup, garlic, fennel, fennel seed, cashews, alfalfa, asparagus, almonds, sunflower seeds, sesame seeds, coconut, fennel, chaste tree fruit, chicken soup, cilantro, papaya (some say green works better), pumpkin, dates, and ginger. All of these foods are powerhouse sources of nutrients that also help in milk production.

Herbs, Teas, and Nutritional Supplements

As mentioned, garlic, ginger, and fennel seed can increase milk production. Other options along the herbal variety include fenugreek, anise, coriander, cumin, dandelion, dill, caraway, red clover, red raspberry, nettle, marshmallow root, borage, and blessed thistle. These are commonly made into teas or tinctures and are widely appreciated for their ability to increase milk supply.

The most common herbal remedies for increasing breast milk production include:

Garlic & Ginger are two herbs that seem to help with almost every health ailment. Both are known galactagogues, and there

are also additional benefits to consuming both of these while breastfeeding. Ginger root stimulates the body in many ways, including the release of milk. Eating garlic or taking a garlic supplement can stimulate the supply of milk and can reduce the risk of mastitis (and alleviate it). Babies have also been found to enjoy the taste of breast milk when their mothers consume copious amounts of garlic and therefore, nurse more often.

Red Raspberry Leaf is a regular ingredient in pregnancy and breastfeeding teas and tinctures. It helps to increase breast milk production, and it also helps the uterus recover after birth. Red Raspberry Leaf is incredibly high in vitamins and minerals, including Niacin (a B vitamin).

Alfalfa is great for increasing breast milk production while providing the body with many vitamins and minerals. It is particularly high in Vitamin K, which helps to staunch bleeding. Many midwives encourage clients to consume alfalfa for six weeks before birth and for several months after birth to help avoid hemorrhaging, to help the body recover from the birth, and to help the body produce plenty of breast milk.

Fenugreek (*Trigonella foenum-graecum*) is a member of the pea family and is commonly used around the world for centuries as a herbal galactagogue. It has been theorized that fenugreek may affect milk production due to the fact that milk glands are similar to sweat glands, and fenugreek stimulates sweat production. The herb is usually discontinued once milk supply has reached the desired output, but there is no risk with using the herb long term.

It's said that with fenugreek you can judge the proper dosage by smell. Once you have reached the ideal dosage of fenugreek, your sweat is said to smell like maple syrup.

Goat's Rue (*Galega officinalis*) is widely used in Europe due to the observation that it increased milk supply in cattle in

the early 1900's. No human trials have been done; however, limited studies involving animals have shown a milk supply increase of up to 50%.

Milk Thistle (*Silybum marianum*), also known as St. Mary's thistle, has been historically used in Europe. Early Christians thought that the white veins on its leaves represented Mary's milk.

Inositol and Choline are two vitamins in the B complex family that have been used for centuries to help increase breast milk production. Too many B vitamins in the body can hinder milk production, and taking just one or two B vitamin nutrients without the other B vitamins for long periods of time can cause problems. The effectiveness of nutritional supplementation is highly individualized, as it depends upon whether someone happens to be deficient in something they may never have otherwise noticed.

[Click to see infographic](#)

How To Increase Your Milk Supply Without Losing Your Mind (By Mom Loves Best)

Conclusion

Not all breast milk is created equal. The better the mother's diet, the better her breast milk will be. Eating a truly healthy diet consists of 80% raw produce, more vegetables than fruit. A healthy diet isn't found in packages. Healthy foods don't have ingredients that only a chemist would understand. A healthy diet eliminates artificial flavors, colors, preservatives, MSG, trans fats, and GMOs. The healthiest diet is a diverse, organic diet filled with nutrient dense foods and plenty of clean water. A healthy diet makes the healthiest breast milk. If a breastfeeding mother consumes pesticides in her food, they will be passed on to her baby in her breast

milk.

While building a good milk supply may seem challenging, the number one thing to keep in mind is that the more you feed the baby, the more your body will produce. The ideas mentioned in this article are meant to help support your body's efforts to produce milk. Keeping yourself in the best possible health will help your body in your endeavors to feed your baby. Taking a nutritional supplement can help with making sure you get all the nutrition your body needs.

Supplements that Promote Lactation:

- Lactoferrin 250mg – Jarrow Formulas
- Galactagogue Formula (Formerly Lactate Support) – Gaia Herbs
- Mothers Lactation – Herb Farm
- More galactagogue supplements

Further Reading:

- *The Best Supplement and the Best Herb*
- *SIDS and SUID*
- *Circumcision, the Primal Cut – A Human Rights Violation*
- *Common Bad Parenting Advice You Should Ignore*

Sources:

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- *10 Foods to Increase Lactation* – Mom 365
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- *I'm not pumping enough milk. What can I do?* – kellymom
- *Fenugreek: One Remedy for Low Milk Production* – Breastfeeding Online
- Swafford S, Berens P: Effect of fenugreek on breast milk volume. Abstract, 5th International Meeting of the Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine, September 11-13, 2000, Tucson, AZ.

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