
What is relactation?

- Relactation is when you have stopped breastfeeding or pumping and would like to start again.
- Most mothers with low milk supply caused by not removing milk often enough can start to make a partial or full milk supply again. To do this, you will need to follow a relactation plan and work with a lactation consultant.
- Your baby can benefit from breastfeeding or getting fed your pumped milk even if you do not have a full milk supply.

How do my breasts make milk?

- Your breasts start to make milk after your baby is born. Hormones after birth play a big role in your milk supply.
- After the first weeks of your baby's life, these hormones return to the levels they were before pregnancy. Your milk supply starts to depend on removing milk from your breasts often.
- The younger your baby and the more milk your body made in the early weeks, the better your chance of making milk again.

How do I make more milk?

The most helpful things to do for relactation are frequent breast stimulation and thorough breast emptying.

If your baby **can breastfeed**:

- Offer both breasts at every feeding (8 or more times each day).
- Be patient. Do not force your baby to latch on.
- If your baby resists breastfeeding, offer your breast:
 - When they are not very hungry (sooner than they may feed most often).
 - When they are sleepy and relaxed.
- Talk with your baby's doctor about how much infant formula or expressed breast milk you need to feed your baby in addition to breastfeeding.
- Use a breast pump after breastfeeding to more fully empty your breasts. This can help you make more milk faster.

If your baby **cannot breastfeed**:

- Express milk with a hospital-grade breast pump. Pump 8 or more times each day. Ask your lactation consultant:
 - How to get a hospital-grade breast pump.
 - How to use the breast pump the best way.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.

Relactation, continued

- Pump both breasts for 15 to 20 minutes. Pump both breasts at the same time if you are able.
 - Start when you wake up in the morning.
 - Pump every 2 to 3 hours during the day.
 - It is important to use the breast pump at least one time overnight.
- Hold your baby skin to skin before you pump. Do this as often as you can.
- Use your hands to massage your breasts before you pump. Squeeze your breasts gently while you use the breast pump.

What tells my body to make more milk?

- When even small amounts of milk stay in your breasts for many hours or overnight, it tells your body to make less milk.
- Stimulate and empty your breasts around the clock to tell your body to make more milk. You may pump very small amounts of milk at first.
- It is important to pump or breastfeed often, even if you only get a small amount of milk.
- Talk with your baby's doctor about how much infant formula or expressed breast milk you need to feed your baby in addition to breastfeeding.

What else can I do to increase my milk supply?

Some mothers use herbs or prescription medicines to help increase their milk supply. Please talk with your doctor about whether these are safe for you. Herbs, supplements, medicines and special foods will not increase your milk supply unless they are combined with frequent milk removal with a breast pump or by breastfeeding.

How do I decide if I should relactate?

While your milk offers many benefits to your baby, relactation is not always the best choice. It takes a lot of time and energy that you may need to spend in other ways, such as when your baby is in the hospital or you have other reasons that affect your ability to make milk.

- It is important to have a support person and guidance from a lactation consultant. Ask your doctor for a referral to a lactation consultant.
- Your lactation consultant can help you decide your goals for relactation.

If you choose to relactate, you will need to pump or breastfeed at least 8 times each day. You will need to do this for at least 1 week and up to 1 month before you see full results.

This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child's doctor or a member of your child's healthcare team about specific care of your child.

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