

PEDIATRIC  
ASSOCIATES



## Lactation Consulting Service Reduced Milk Supply

### Common Causes:

1. Infrequent nursing (not often enough or long enough).
2. Improper positioning and latch-on at breast.
3. Regular use of formula supplements.
4. Overuse of pacifier.
5. Some medications and Nicotine.
6. Weak or lazy suck.

### Prevention and Treatment Suggestions:

1. Watch for proper latch-on (baby has mouth open wide, tongue down, with gums on areola).
2. Breastfeed frequently and long enough.
  - a) Baby under six months:  
Nurse 10-12 times per day for at least 10-15 minutes per breast.  
Offer both breasts at each feeding.  
Pump your breasts if baby doesn't nurse.
  - b) Baby over six months:  
Nurse first, then offer solids.
3. Avoid pacifiers and supplemental feedings. If baby has been getting formula supplements, gradually cut back on the amount of milk, as breastmilk supply increases.
4. Try "switch-nursing." Switch baby back and forth between breast several times during a feeding. Do this only if baby pulls off breast and becomes fussy after breast feeding less than 10 minutes.
5. Keep track of the number of wet diapers and bowel movements per day. Baby should have least 6-8 wet diapers, and 2 or more bowel movements per day.
6. Check with your doctor before taking any medications.
7. Pump every 3 hours for 15 minutes with double electric hospital grade pump. (8 times in 24 hours)

Keep in close contact with your baby's doctor.

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## Fenugreek, An Herb To Increase Milk Supply

Mothers who wish to build their milk supplies may consider using Fenugreek. Fenugreek is an herb that has long been used by healers as medicine, and as a galactagogue (to boost milk supply). Historically, fenugreek is an herb, *trigonella foenum-graecum* L, and is grown in various countries around the world including Argentina, France, India, and North Africa, and in the Mediterranean countries. The dried ripe seed of the plant is used, with one active ingredient being diosgenin. Fenugreek is used as a ground seed (high in fiber) in capsule form, or in tea, to increase milk production. The tea is weaker than the capsule form.



The dose is 2-3 capsules (580-610 mg each), taken by mouth 3 times/day. Taking a lesser dose may not increase supply. Results are often noticed in 1-3 days, although some mothers report no improvement. A bottle of 100 capsules can cost between \$6-8 US, and it is available in health food stores and natural food stores. There is no reliable clinical research that supports the use of this herb, although many practitioners do use it with breastfeeding mothers with good success. Fenugreek is used in artificial maple flavorings, and also has a food product. If used to build milk supply, Fenugreek can generally be discontinued after milk supply is increased, as long as a mother can regularly breastfeed or pump.



The use of Fenugreek may cause a maple-syrup odor in a mother or baby's sweat. It can have effects such as lowering blood sugar, and may cause allergy in some sensitive people with a history of asthma. Diabetic or asthmatic or allergic mothers should consult health care providers before using Fenugreek. Use of this herb may cause diarrhea. The FDA generally regards fenugreek as safe, but should not be used by pregnant mothers.

### Tips:

Use brand name herbal preparations with expiration dates and capsule strength printed on the label.

Consult your doctor and lactation consultant (**BNN**) if you have milk supply issues. Herbs will not solve all milk supply problems.

Check with your doctor before taking any herbal remedy, especially if you have other health concerns.

- Consult your doctor if you notice side effects of herbal remedies.
- Check the label, making sure that no other substances are combined with the chosen herb.
- Watch for diarrhea, aggravation in asthmatic or diabetic conditions.
- Do not exceed recommended dose, as serious side effects may occur.

References:

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Medela, Inc. (USA), 1101 Corporate Dr., McHenry, IL 60050 Phone 1-800-435-8316 or 815-363-1166

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