

CHAPTER 4: WHEN BREAST MILK SEEMS LESS

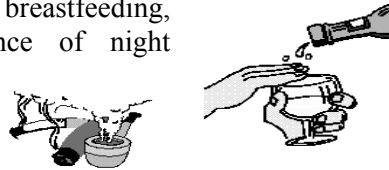
The usual reason to start top feed (other milk types) is simply an unconfirmed doubt that breast milk seems to be less! This usually occurs during first few days after delivery. Later around 3 months, when mother feels the breast to be lighter, similar doubt again arises.

If baby is weak or mother's confidence on breast milk is less such a situation is created. This is especially during first baby. Adds to this is a loose comment from neighbors and relatives like: " baby is crying frequently because milk is less", "baby's growth appears to be less", "baby's growth is less than other child", etc.

IN THESE SITUATIONS THERE CAN BE TWO REASONS:

1] Breast milk production is really less:

- ◆ **Mother's mental state:** lack of confidence, worry, stress, fights at home, unwillingness or lack of interest to breastfeed, unwanted child, and tiredness.
- ◆ **Feeding pattern:** Late starting of breastfeeding, infrequent breastfeeding, absence of night feeds, unnecessary top feeding.
- ◆ Pregnancy.
- ◆ **Habits:** Tobacco, alcohol, etc.
- ◆ **Drugs taken by mother:** Antiallergic, cold remedies, antihistaminic, oral contraceptives, diuretics drugs.
- ◆ **Mother's disease:** TB, cancer, chronic disease, depression, absence of breast.



2] Milk is adequate but child cannot suckle properly

- ◆ Inverted nipple;
- ◆ Congested, engorged breast.
- ◆ Sick child.
- ◆ Wrong method of putting baby to the breast.

IMPROPER REASONS HELD FOR REDUCED BREAST MILK:

Age of mother: Age of mother has no major relation to ability to breastfeed

Mother's diet: Normal nutritious food like chapatti, pulses, rice, vegetables are adequate. No special foods are required. Only additional calories, calcium and iron are needed.

Caesarean and Episiotomies: Pain may decrease breast milk for first few days but not in long run.

Joining work: Working women has to take care to breastfeed regularly or expresses milk manually. For this reason alone crèches are created at workplace and that too by governments in many countries.

Menses and Sex: Belief that menses & sexual activity decreases breast milk is wrong.

First pregnancy or later pregnancy: This also does not affect ability to feed.

JUDGING ADEQUACY OF BREAST MILK FOR BABY

Firstly, nature has made so nice arrangement that for the first six months only breast milk alone is enough for baby's nutrition. The best indicator of adequate breast milk is gain of weight. Other indicators are a satisfied baby (baby does not become hungry for 2 to 3 hours after a breastfeed) and frequency of urination 8 times or more in 24 hours.

If baby remains hungry after breastfeed, it drinks additional milk readily. It should be kept in mind that some cranky, irritable infants stop breastfeeding, cry and start again. They satisfy themselves this way.

If breast milk is less, weighing the child every 14 days will reveal it. Child will look sick, may be constipated and urine may become dark. Normally there is weight loss of 5 to 10 % in the first 4 to 6 days of birth. In 10 to 20 days weight comes back to birth level. Thereafter weight increases by an average of 20 to 30 gms daily for first 3 months and then by average 400 to 600 gms monthly till age of 1 year.

If after all efforts breast milk is inadequate (baby does not gain weight) top feeding may be started. Use it only as supplementary food and not as replacement for breast feed (i.e., give it only after breastfeeding). During the first three weeks of birth, dilute top-milk with equal amount of water and thereafter only undiluted milk should be given. Boil top-

milk and give by cup and spoon. Keep on stirring the boiled milk while cooling so that cream does not form but remains dissolved. One spoon of sugar should be added to 100 gms of milk. **Increase efforts at breastfeeding**

CAN DRUGS BE TAKEN TO INCREASE THE BREAST MILK?

- ☞ Modern medicine has no drugs to increase quantity of breast milk. However, some drugs increases breast milk as a side effect. These include drugs to prevent vomiting, like metoclopramide, psychotropic drugs like haloperidol, chlorpromazine etc. Doctors use these drugs.
- ☞ In indigenous medicines (Ayurveda etc), describes many drugs and remedies. Ultimately, nothing is better than mental peace and confidence of the mother.

WHEN BREASTFEEDING IS NOT SUCCESSFUL

When circumstances preclude breastfeeding (death of mother) or breast milk is less after all efforts, give top feeding as early as possible.

Which milk?

After mother, seek other lactating women to breastfeed the child. If not possible then give animal milk. For practical purpose for child's use, there is no major difference between cow's milk and buffalo's milk. Goat milk is closer to mother's milk. It causes less allergy and diarrhea. Animal milk is better and cheaper than tinned milk. Other options are various type of tinned powder milk. Important thing to remember is to follow instructions strictly. Mix three level teaspoon of powder in 90 ml of water. Use only specific measuring spoon provided with the tin. Fill the spoon up to its brim, neither heaped nor less or pressed. If dilute milk is prepared, baby will remain hungry and pass more urine. If concentrated milk is used, it will overload child's kidneys and may cause diarrhea.

Bottle or cup-spoon?

- ☺ Cup and spoon-feeding is easy, cheaper, and widely available. They are easy to clean and cause fewer illnesses.
- 🍼 Bottle is easier for feeding but more experience is required and it is difficult to clean and carry.

Consult a pediatrician, if bottle feeds are to be given, for learning proper bottle hygiene and allied instructions. Keep the baby in lap and feed with either bottle or cup and spoon.

WHAT TO DO IF BREAST FEED IS LESS?:

- ✓ **Keep the baby close to mother and breastfeed frequently. This increases milk formation, based on “Demand increases Supply” concept.**
- ✓ **If mother has any worry, trouble, stress or tiredness it should be resolved sympathetically. These are common reasons for reduction in breast milk production.**
- ✓ **Relatives should try to boost up mother’s confidence.**
- ✓ **Do not use other types of feeding, if possible.**
- ✓ **Do not give bottle-feeding.**
- ✓ **Solve mother’s queries & difficulties.**
- ✓ **Do not try to judge quantity of milk by expressing breast milk with hand**
- ✓ **Monitor child’s weight every 15 days.**
- ✓ **Scrutinize method of putting child to breast.**
- ✓ **Exercise of walking for 30 minutes daily also helps.**
- ✓ ***Success may take 1^{1/2} to 3 months. Therefore, maintain efforts without worrying about quantity of breast milk.***