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Can You Increase the Fat In Breast Milk?

BY MICHELLE FISK • JUNE 13, 2017

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If you are a nursing mom and concerned about your baby's growth, speak to your pediatrician or a lactation consultant, but consider trying techniques that increase the amount of fat in your breast milk. Typically, a mother's breast milk contains 20 calories per ounce, but there is significant variability in its fat content throughout the day, reports The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. As a nursing mother, your diet does not influence how much fat is in your milk, but it does influence what kinds of fat are in your milk, so eat healthy fats to promote your baby's growth and development.

Pumping

Your baby gets foremilk when she starts a nursing session, which is mostly water, protein and other nutrients with little calories and fat. As she continues to nurse, she receives hindmilk, which has a significantly higher amount of fat and calories. The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia recommends separating the foremilk from the hindmilk if your baby isn't getting enough fat or you produce more milk than your baby needs. By pumping milk out before your baby nurses, she'll get the hindmilk to support adequate growth. Pump one-third of the milk you would pump from a full pumping session to remove the foremilk.

Frequency of Nursing Sessions

You can also give your baby longer and more frequent nursing sessions to ensure she is drinking the hindmilk. Babies who nurse longer get both the foremilk and the hindmilk. If you're baby doesn't like to nurse for long periods, decrease the time between nursing sessions. Certified Lactation Consultant Kelly Bonyata states on her website, Kelly Mom

Parenting and Breastfeeding, that the fat content of milk is higher when feedings are close together. Babies vary on how long it takes them to fill up on higher-fat milk, so Bonyata also recommends not switching breasts until your baby stops sucking so she gets her fill of higher fat milk at the end of a feeding.

Breast Compression

If your baby sucks without drinking at the breast, try compressing your breast to stimulate the milk ejection reflex so your little one is getting enough high-fat milk. Breast compression works especially well in the first few days of life if your baby doesn't latch on well or if your baby tends to fall asleep while nursing. To compress your breast, hold your baby with one hand and encircle your breast with the other hand. When your baby stops drinking, squeeze your breast. She should start drinking again. Continue applying pressure until your baby stops drinking. Then release, wait a few minutes and repeat until your baby stops drinking even with you compressing your breast.

Types of Fat in Breast Milk

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The fats you eat are the fats your baby will get through your breast milk. A study published in 2002 in the "European Journal of Clinical Nutrition" demonstrated that the breast milk of Spanish mothers was lower in saturated fat and higher in monounsaturated and omega-3 fatty acids, which reflects the traditional Mediterranean diet of Spain. Eat plenty of monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fatty acids found in vegetable oils, nuts, seeds and fish as opposed to saturated fats, which you get through meat and full-fat dairy products. Monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fatty acids are vital to your baby's brain and eye development and the essential fatty acids in breast milk are associated with higher IQ scores and better vision.