

# Common Challenges and When to Ask for Help

Navigating the wide range of feelings you may experience can change from moment to moment. Be patient with yourself.

**I am struggling with letdown.** Stress can sometimes impact milk letdown hormones. Give yourself a few minutes, take slow calming breaths, do a gentle breast massage to help start milk flow, and say affirmations. Look at pictures or watch videos of your baby. A video of your baby nursing may be even more helpful.

**I think my milk supply has dropped.** Milk supply can be influenced by many things such as:

- **Dehydration.** Have a water bottle with you to help stay hydrated throughout the day.
- **Stress.** Feeling stressed can contribute to lower milk production.
- **Flange size or pump is not working properly.** If pumping is painful or the flanges leave marks around the nipple, you may need a different size or type of flange. You may need different size flanges for the right and left breast. If your pump is not working properly, contact the company for help troubleshooting.
- **Pumped milk volume changes throughout the day.** This is normal, most lactating parents pump more milk in the morning compared to later in the day.
- **You may be skipping a pumping session too often.** The number of times you pump or nurse in a 24-hour period should be as consistent as possible whether you are with or away from your baby. If you consistently skip a pumping or nursing session, your milk supply will drop.

**Effective ways that may boost your milk supply:**

- [Hands-on pumping.](#)
- Pump for 5-10 minutes after your baby is done nursing.
- Increase how long you pump or the number of times you pump in a day.

Remember! Most babies are more efficient than breast pumps.

**TIP**

Any amount of human milk is beneficial. Supplementing with donor milk or formula may be an option to consider.



**My child care provider is feeding more than I can pump.** Ask your childcare provider to ask how many ounces and how often your baby is fed.

- Check out the Caregiver Tips for Bottle Feeding Human Milk for ideas to share.

**My breast has a firm red area.** Having a firm red area that does not go away after feeding or pumping may be a clogged duct. Apply a warm compress for a few minutes before feeding or pumping. Massage of the area and apply gentle, but firm, pressure while pumping or feeding. The clog should resolve in 1-2 feeding or pumping sessions. Contact your healthcare provider if you develop a fever or the red area doesn't go away. This could be an infection called mastitis.

**My baby is refusing to nurse.** Nursing strikes happen for many reasons and are usually a temporary reaction to an external factor.

[Common triggers of nursing strikes.](#)

**My baby is nursing more often at night.** This can happen at any stage of your nursing journey. Common causes can be growth spurts, teething, maternal separation, ear infection, or a change in routine. [Learn more about Reverse Cycling.](#)

**I am feeling overwhelmed.** Taking care of yourself can help manage stress that may come with parenting and provides good role-modeling for your family. [Parent and Caregiver Self-Care Tips.](#)

**When to ask for help from your Healthcare Provider, a Lactation Consultant, WIC (Woman, Infant and Children) Counselor, or Public Health Nurse:**

- To get an electric breast pump.
- To learn how to use your pump.
- You have pain with pumping or nursing, or you notice nipple damage.
- To develop or revise a feeding or pumping schedule.
- You're concerned your baby is not gaining weight.
- Your baby is coughing, choking, or fussy during feedings at the breast.
- You feel stressed, anxious, or isolated and it is very difficult to get through a day.
- You have lost interest in eating or taking care of yourself or your baby.
- You have thoughts of harming yourself or your baby.

### Resources

- [National Maternal Mental Health 24/7 Hotline](#) 1-833-TLC-MAMA (1-833-852-6262)
- [National Women's Health & Breastfeeding Helpline](#) 1-800-994-9662 (Mon-Fri 9:00-6:00 ET)
- [Postpartum Support International - PSI](#)



**Eating oatmeal, almonds, or hummus may help boost milk supply.**