

Aeroflow Breastpumps

Nursing Strikes

After establishing a stable and connected breastfeeding relationship, it can be startling when our babies suddenly begin refusing to nurse. These simple tips can help you identify the potential cause and work toward a solution.

What is a Nursing Strike?

A nursing strike is a sudden refusal to nurse, often accompanied by changes in baby's behavior, like fussiness and agitation at the breast.^{1,2} Nursing strikes are not the same as self-weaning. Self-weaning is a voluntary, gradual reduction in nursing sessions and is uncommon for infants under one year old.

Possible Causes of Nursing Strike:^{1,2,3}

- Recent changes to your schedule (going back to work, recent travel, having company)
- Nursing less often than usual (going back to work, leaving baby with a sitter longer than usual, trying to extend the time between feedings)
- Your baby is ill
- Your baby is experiencing pain from teething or an injury inside the mouth
- New pregnancy
- Ovulation (temporary reduction in milk supply)
- Changes in your scent (lotion, soap, deodorant, perfume)
- Changes to flow of breast milk or overall supply
- Your reaction to being bitten, while nursing, startled baby

While navigating a nursing strike can be stressful, keep in mind that most babies go back to breastfeeding as normal in a short period of time. When you offer the breast, keep the experience as pleasant as possible for your baby. Stop offering as soon as your baby seems upset or frustrated.

Things To Try:¹

- Skin-to-Skin
- Taking a warm bath with baby
- Dream feeding (offering the breast while baby is just falling asleep or just waking up)

- New breastfeeding positions
- Stimulating milk flow before offering the breast
- Minimizing distractions (e.g., phone, T.V.)
- Offer the breast while moving (while wearing baby in a carrier or rocking in a rocking chair)
- Wear baby in a wrap or carrier as much as possible
- Attempting to feed at the earliest feeding cues

Ensure Baby is Receiving Adequate Milk and Protect Your Supply

- Pump or [hand express](#) each missed nursing session.
- Offer your expressed milk via an alternative feeding method (syringe, cup, dropper, spoon, bottle).
- If using bottles, be sure to use a [paced bottle feeding](#) technique to help prevent from developing a preference for the flow of milk from the bottle.

How Long Does a Nursing Strike Last?

- Typically a nursing strike will last between 2-4 days but can go on longer. If you've tried the above techniques and you're still having a hard time, reach out to an IBCLC for additional help with getting the baby back to the breast.¹

What If I Have Questions?

If you are interested in learning more, this Aeroflow class expands on some of the topics discussed above:

- Ultimate Breastfeeding Prep
- Lactation Q&A

To register for these classes, log into your portal or click [here](#).

Want More Info?

For a directory of Aeroflow's other Care Guides offering information on pregnancy, baby care, and more, browse our comprehensive list of titles:

<https://www.hersourcehealth.com/aeroflow-care-guides/>

References:

1. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/1288559/>
2. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4662758/#B3>
3. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7982258/#:~:text=The%20nursing%20strike%20can%20be,not%20insufficient%20for%20her%20child>