

Aeroflow Breastpumps

Overproduction and Forceful Letdown

What Does it Mean to Have an Oversupply of Breast Milk?

An oversupply is when you are producing more breast milk than your baby needs. This can happen when your breasts are overstimulated by too much additional pumping, or it might occur naturally if your baby is young and hasn't "caught up" to your milk supply yet. Either way, oversupply can be uncomfortable and cause issues with breastfeeding if you don't know how to manage your excess milk.

If you are currently making more milk than your baby needs and are managing your breast fullness by occasional pumping or hand expression, and you are happy with this arrangement, this guide may not be for you. The purpose of this guide is to provide information and support for mothers and babies who are struggling with too much milk and need strategies to help improve their breastfeeding relationship.

What is an Overactive or Forceful Let-down?

Overactive, or forceful let-down (Milk Ejection Reflex) is often associated with oversupply and refers to a rapid release of milk during breastfeeding. This fast flow may overwhelm your baby, making it difficult for them to stay latched and feed comfortably. Mothers may notice a forceful spray of milk early in the feeding, which can cause the baby to cough, gasp, or pull away from the breast. Understanding techniques to manage forceful let-down is an important step in making feedings more comfortable for you both.

Signs that you May Have an Oversupply or Forceful Let-down:

- Baby gains weight very quickly
- Baby pulls away from the breast, coughing and crying a few minutes into the feed
- Baby may clamp down, to try to slow the flow of milk
- Baby eats very quickly and may refuse the second breast
- Baby is gassy, fussy, and spits up often
- Baby has a hard time nursing for comfort
- Mom has to pump to stay comfortable

What Can You Do?

Generally, there are two strategies for helping babies cope with oversupply or forceful let-down. The first is experimenting with latch and positioning techniques to help your baby better manage the fast flow. The second option is to take measures to downshift your milk supply to meet your baby's needs.

Since most cases of oversupply and forceful let-down will resolve on their own over time, if your baby is less than 2 months old, it is not recommended that you take significant steps to decrease your milk supply. It is common for some mothers to make more milk than their babies need early on, and to feel full sometimes, even after feedings. This usually improves significantly once your baby is 6-8 weeks old and is consistently taking larger feedings and emptying your breasts more completely.

Steps that May Help

- **Upright Nursing Positions**
 - Most breastfeeding positions can be modified to keep your baby more upright during feeds, helping them better control the fast flow of milk.
- **Ditch the Nursing Pillow**
 - One easy way to position your baby more upright during feedings, is to breastfeed without the support of a pillow. This allows you to lower your baby's bottom into your lap, keeping them more upright.
- **Laid-Back Positioning**
 - Try using more reclined or "laid-back" breastfeeding positions. Since the milk has to go "uphill" in this position, gravity will slow the flow, making it easier for your baby to handle.
- **Side Lying**
 - Side lying can enable your baby to easily pop-off the breast when the flow is too forceful. Make sure you have a waterproof pad under your baby and breast to catch any leaking milk, so your bed doesn't get soaked.
- **Manage Let-Down**
 - If positional changes don't help, you can try gently taking your baby off the breast once you see that they are starting to get overwhelmed. You can collect any leaking or spraying milk in a burp cloth or collection cup. Once your let-down has subsided, try relatching your baby.
- **Pump in Moderation**
 - Many mothers find that moderate pumping or hand expression after feedings, once or twice a day, can help alleviate breast fullness and provide them with expressed breast milk when needed.

- **Patience as Your Baby Grows**
 - Typically, things will balance out around 2-3 months postpartum. As your baby grows, they will become better at handling milk more quickly, reducing the issues associated with oversupply and forceful let-down. Until then, hang in there!
- **Block Feeding**
 - If you are still struggling with oversupply or forceful let-down and your baby is over 2-3 months old, sometimes “block feeding” can help downshift your milk supply. This method of reducing milk supply can cause complications including plugged ducts and mastitis, and may cause your milk supply to decrease quickly, sometimes resulting in no longer making enough milk. Block feeding should only be attempted under the guidance of a [Lactation Consultant](#).
- **Complicated Cases**
 - Mothers facing more complicated situations, such as transitioning to breastfeeding after exclusive pumping, a history of repeated plugged ducts or mastitis, dealing with hormonal issues, or other unique challenges, should also seek the support of a [Lactation Consultant](#) who can provide invaluable support in overcoming breastfeeding challenges like oversupply or forceful let-down.

What If I Have Questions?

If you are interested in learning more, these Aeroflow classes expand on some of the topics discussed above:

- Ultimate Breastfeeding Prep
- Pumping 101
- 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://lila.org/breastfeeding-info/oversupply/>
2. *Breastfeeding Answers Second Edition* Nancy Mohrbacher starting on pg. 457