

Critical First Two Weeks

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Why do we need to know how much milk a mother is producing between days 8-13?

The first 2 weeks postpartum are a critical time in lactation. Copious milk production begins around 72-96 hours post delivery as a result of hormonal changes. At this time milk production continues if milk is removed completely and frequently. Prolactin is the hormone that promotes milk production. Maternal serum levels are high during the first 2 weeks postpartum but levels drop dramatically 2 weeks after delivery. During the first 2 weeks postpartum low milk supply may be corrected if the cause can be identified. However, after 2 weeks, milk supply in pump dependent women is almost impossible to improve.

Expected milk volumes:

Day 0-2	~30 ml/24 hours
Day 3-7	≥350 ml/24 hours
Day 7 – 14	≥500 – 1000ml/24 hours

Causes of low milk supply in pump dependent women:

- Ineffective breast pump
- Infrequent pump use
- Ending a pumping session before all of the available milk is removed
- Improperly fitting breast shields
- Pregnancy related illness
- Problems with milk ejection reflex related to inability to relax due to
 - Anxiety regarding infant health
 - Lack of privacy
 - Intense stress, fatigue, and pain

What can we do to help mothers establish an abundant milk supply?

Reinforce these important points about pumping:

- Pump 8 times/24 hours
- Hospital grade breast pump more effective than lightweight electric or hand pumps
- Breast massage before and during pumping increases milk removal
- Relaxation techniques promote the milk ejection reflex
- Adequate sleep helps with milk production and promotes the milk ejection reflex

If you identify mothers with low milk volumes please call, page or leave a message for
(the breastfeeding expert in your hospital)