

16 Ways to Help Your Milk Flow



Sometimes a mother has a slow flow and it is not clear exactly why. Here are some tips that can help.

1. **Bra.** Be sure your bra fits comfortably and is not tight-fitting or constricting.
2. **Nap, relax.** Lay down when you can. Let your worries go. Feel the heaviness of your body on the bed or floor. Lay your hands on your sides or abdomen, and feel your breath lifting and sinking your body. Breathe smoothly and deeply. An optimal length of time to nap or relax is 25 – 30 minutes, but as little as 5 minutes helps.
3. **Gravity.** Lean over and swing your breasts gently from side to side. Gravity promotes milk flow. Some mothers support themselves above their baby—who is lying on his back—and allow their breast to gently hang into the baby’s mouth (take care to be sure your baby’s nose is free to breathe).
4. **Breath-work.** Inhale softly through your nose, as if meditating. Imagine the air flowing up behind your eyes and behind your forehead before it goes down into your lungs. This stimulates the pituitary to produce oxytocin, and can trigger a milk ejection.
5. **Compression.** Try a compress of warm, moist towels on the breasts before pumping.
6. **Breast massage.** Stroke your breast from your chest wall to the areola, touching all sides. Now, with your fingertips, explore the tissue within your breast, very gently, and find the milk glands. They feel like little clusters of peas. Move your fingertips in small circles around the glands, massaging one cluster at a time. This triggers that cluster to release its milk. Be patient! The area will become soft, and you might even feel the milk flowing down the milk duct to the areola.
7. **Breast compression from below:** With your hand supporting the breast from below in the ‘C- position,’ and the fingers and thumb well back from the areola, press the breast gently but firmly toward the wall of the chest. This effectively compresses, or presses out, the milk. Breast compression should not hurt!

Breast compression from above: use the same movements to compress the breasts from above. Be gentle.

8. **Hydrate.** Drink a large glass of water or other beverage before or while nursing or pumping. Traditionally, mothers drink warm beverages, soups or broths.
9. Good hydration—especially before or during breastfeeding, and at night before bed—enables their milk to flow more freely. Staying hydrated also helps prevent plugged milk ducts.
10. **Rescue Remedy.** Take a dropperful of the Bach flowers “Rescue Remedy” before breastfeeding or pumping. This remedy soothes anxiety. Anxiety and tension can inhibit milk flow in some mothers.
11. **Visualization.** Imagine a peaceful scene of particular beauty or meaning to you. Breathe deeply, and visualize your milk flowing. Keep a photo of your baby close to your pump.
12. **Massage.** While breastfeeding or pumping, ask a trusted person to stand behind you and massage your shoulders and the area between your shoulder blades with their thumbs.
13. **Double stimulation.** Mothers with letdown difficulties sometimes find that pumping both breasts at once, or pumping on one breast while breastfeeding their baby on the other, helps the let-down and increases the flow. It is a balancing act: supporting the baby with pillows on one side, and attaching the pump to the other, perhaps using a special bra that holds the flask of the pump, so we have a free hand.
14. **Oxytocin nose-spray.** If deep breathing and other techniques are not sufficient, an oxytocin nose-spray may help. Ask your doctor for a prescription to be compounded by a pharmacist. Do not use the nose-spray more than a few times, however, as it may reduce the body’s responsiveness to its own oxytocin and this will impair the letdown!
15. **Alternative Therapies:** The stressors of pregnancy, birth, and 24/7 infant care easily leaves us depleted and out of balance. Therapies such as craniosacral therapy, acupuncture, massage, mom-and-baby yoga, talk therapy and hypnotherapy can restore that balance, and this naturally has an impact on milk production and milk flow.
16. **Find Your Team:** Build a team of mothers groups and specialized professionals who can help you through the initial difficulties.