

Herbs and Foods to Increase Your Breast Milk Supply

This handout gives helpful information about foods and herbs (galactogogues) that can help increase a mother's supply of breast milk.

How can I increase my milk supply?

To keep up your milk supply, you need to empty your breasts 8 or more times a day in the first few months. If you are doing this, and your milk supply is not enough for your baby, you can also take herbs or eat foods (*galactogogues*) to promote lactation.

Even if you take a galactagogue, you still need to **empty your breasts well at least 8 times a day** by nursing or pumping. Talk with a lactation consultant for help with this.

What herbs can help?

You can buy these galactagogue herbs without a prescription:

- Fenugreek seeds
- Moringa (Malunggay)
- Galega (Goat's Rue)
- Shatavari

Which herb do I take?

An herb that helps one mother may not work for another. To find out if an herb will work for you, take the herb for 3 to 7 days and watch your milk supply. You should see an increase in your milk after that time. If you do not see an increase, try one of the other herbs.



Talk with a lactation consultant if you have questions about your breast milk supply.

How do I take the herbs?

These herbs come as capsules, liquids, or teas. Each can be taken by itself or with others. Follow the dose instructions on the package.

Are there any side effects?

- Some herbs and herb blends are not advised for pregnant women. Check the label for any warnings.

- Any herb can cause an allergic reaction. Stop using the herb if you have any reactions.
- Some herbs cause perspiration, gas, or loose stools. Fenugreek can make your urine and sweat smell sweet, like maple syrup.
- Both fenugreek and galega can lower blood sugar and cholesterol.
- Do not take fenugreek if you take *anticoagulants* (blood-thinners).

Where can I buy these herbs?

You can buy these herbs without a prescription on *Amazon.com* or in stores that sell herbal remedies. You can find fenugreek at most drugstores. Here are 2 Seattle-area stores to try:

- Super Supplements, 4336 Roosevelt Way N.E. (206.633.4428)
- Target, 302 N.E. Northgate Way (206. 494.0897)

To Learn More

- Visit <https://toxnet.nlm.nih.gov/newtoxnet/lactmed.htm> to search for safety information on drugs and supplements that affect breastfeeding.
- Visit www.uwmedicine.org/services/obstetrics/documents/Low-Milk-Production.pdf to read a handout about other ways to increase milk supply: “Low Milk Production: Causes, treatment, and prevention.”

Foods to Increase Your Milk Supply

It’s always good to eat a well-balanced, healthy diet and drink plenty of water. To promote milk production, you may want to add some *lactogenic* foods (foods that increase milk secretion) to your diet:

- Vegetables: fennel root, beetroot, carrots, yam, sweet potato, dark leafy greens
- Fruit: dates, figs, apricots, papaya
- Some fats: butter, olive oil, coconut oil, sesame oil
- Grains: barley, oats and oatmeal, quinoa, rice, brewer’s yeast
- Nuts and seeds: almonds, sesame seeds, sunflower seeds, chia seeds, hemp seeds, flaxseeds, coconut
- Legumes: chickpeas, lentils, peas, green beans, kidney, black beans, white beans
- Seasonings: marjoram, basil, pepper, fennel, anise, dill, caraway, cumin, garlic, ginger, onion

“Lactation cookies” are also a nice treat to make. You can find recipes online that include oats, brewer’s yeast, flaxseed, and more.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns. UWMC clinic staff can also help.

Lactation Services:
206.598.4628

Weekdays: 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Weekends and holidays:
9 a.m. to 1 p.m.