

Caring for Your Child
Separating Your Milk to Help Your Baby Grow

The amount of fat in your breast milk can vary during a pumping session and at different times of the day. If your baby doesn't get enough fat, he may have trouble gaining weight. If you are pumping more milk than your baby needs each day, you can increase the fat in your milk to help your baby grow.

The first milk that comes out of your breast during a pumping or feeding session is called "foremilk". Foremilk is mostly water. It contains protein and other nutrients, but it is low in calories and fat. As the breast is emptied, the amount of fat in the milk gets higher and the milk has more calories. The milk at the very end of a pumping or breastfeeding session is called "hindmilk". You can separate your milk to collect milk that is higher in fat and calories. If you make lots of milk (more than 900 ml per day), or if you get a lot at one pumping (more than 200 ml), your milk might be watery. You may need to separate it to increase the fat.

It is helpful to know how much milk you get from each breast at each pumping session. You can plan to remove the first 1/3 that you pump. For instance, if you normally pump 60 ml on each breast, you will remove 20 ml of foremilk. Foremilk can be frozen for later use.

The CHOP lactation consultants can perform a creatocrit on your milk to measure the amount of fat and calories in the milk. Ask your nurse for Patient Family Education sheet 13:B:54 to learn more about creatocrits.

Follow these directions for separating your milk:

1. Have extra breast milk storage containers ready.
2. Begin pumping your breasts with the breast pump. About two minutes after the milk starts flowing steadily, turn the pump off, pour this milk into a separate container and label it "foremilk". This should equal about 1/3 of the usual amount that you pump.
3. Continue pumping until your milk flow stops, then for two more minutes. Label these bottles "hindmilk".
4. Hindmilk can be fed to your baby to help him or her grow! You are an important part of your baby's care.

You may have to separate your milk a few times before we figure out which is the best milk to feed to your baby. We will help you so that you can help your baby grow! You can always contact us at 215-590-4442 if you have any questions.

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