

Relactating / Restarting Breastfeeding

Important information for patients

Contact numbers

Should you require any additional information or help,
please contact the Neonatal Unit on 01270 612282

This leaflet is available in audio, Braille, large print and other languages.
To request a copy, please telephone 01270 612282.



What is relactation?

If you have not started breastfeeding, breastfeeding has been interrupted, or if your milk supply has diminished, it can still be possible to stimulate/re-stimulate milk production. This is referred to as relactation.

Tips on how to encourage relactation

- Hold and cuddle your baby as much as possible, ideally skin to skin, which will help to boost oxytocin, which is a hormone involved in milk production. This will encourage your body to make milk and encourage your baby to feed.
- Express from both of your breasts regularly (about 8 – 12 times a day, including once at night). Expressing releases the hormone prolactin, which stimulates your breasts to make milk. The more often you can express and stimulate your breasts, the quicker your milk supply will respond. It may be easier to express by hand initially.
- Look for a pump which best suits your needs. Ideally a double pump as this is shown to increase milk yield. Check your breastmilk collection set fits correctly to ensure effective milk removal.
- Expressing at least once at night, especially between 2am - 4am can increase your milk supply as prolactin levels are higher at night.
- Massaging your breasts prior to and whilst expressing can increase the amount of milk as this will stimulate your prolactin.
- Try expressing one breast, whilst feeding your baby on the other. This may help to stimulate a let-down reflex.
- Power pumping has shown to increase breast milk yield, this is a short term technique to make more milk and mimics baby cluster feeding. It involves short clusters of expressing for 5-10 minutes more frequently as and when you can fit them in.
- Offer your baby the breast as latching on to the breast is a more effective way of stimulating the breasts. Offer the breast first then top up if needed, once the breasts are emptied always express the breasts after every feed if you are offering top ups via bottle. This is to stimulate them and thus increase supply.

If you need to bottle-feed/top up

- Feed while holding your baby skin-to-skin and close to your breasts in a more upright position not with your baby flat on their back.
- Encourage rooting and gaping by gently brushing your baby's lips with the bottle teat to trigger the reflex to open your baby's mouth wide and encourage a deep latch on the teat. Try to use a teat with a gradual slope from the tip to base so baby's mouth is propped open rather than a tight lipped latch on the end of the teat.
- Bottle feed using paced feeding with a slow flow teat. This is done holding the bottle horizontally to remove pressure from gravity in the bottle. Your baby will have better control over the flow and pace of receiving the milk. Tip the bottle downwards occasionally, which gives your baby pauses in the flow rather than a constant stream of milk throughout the feed.
- With the bottle, try to mimic the first let down that occurs with breastfeeding, by tipping the bottle towards the floor so the milk does not fill the teat for the first few sucks.
- Switch sides whilst you are bottle feeding to replicate what is done whilst breastfeeding.
- If you are using a bottle to top up your baby due to poor weight gain or fussing at the breast, consider returning your baby to the breast after they have finished their top up, so that they can associate the breast with feeling full. They may then be more patient of the slower flow at the breast.

Reintroducing the breast by:

- Breast feeding little and often... Do not worry if your baby does not feed for long to begin with.
- Check your baby is properly positioned and attached to the breast. If you are unsure seek professional advice.
- Use breast compressions to increase the flow of milk whilst your baby is feeding. Breast compression is a way of gently squeezing the breast during a breastfeed to put pressure on the milk glands causing them to release more milk and increase flow. Using a free hand cup and squeeze the breast between thumb and fingers, thumb being on top of the breast and fingers of the same hand below it. Make sure your hand is far enough above the areola and nipple on your breast so not as to disturb your baby's latch. Maintain the pressure whilst your baby is actively sucking and swallowing and release whilst your baby is pausing.
- Choose times to offer a feed when your baby is relaxed, alert and not too hungry
- Try skin to skin first and then bring your baby to the breast in the laid back position. This is often very comfortable for you and your baby and may encourage your baby to attach spontaneously.
- Decrease the number of bottles gradually, as your milk supply increases.
- Consider using a lactation aid (supplementer). A tiny tube is taped next to your nipple and passes into your baby's mouth so your baby can get milk via the tube as well as from your breast. This helps to support your baby as they get used to attaching to the breast.