

HERBS AND FOODS TO INCREASE MILK SUPPLY

Almost all cultures have herbs or foods that are used to increase milk supply and have been passed down through generations¹. There is not much data that proves herbs and foods can increase milk supply. Some herbs may have side effects.

****PROCEED WITH CAUTION AND TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR BEFORE USING ANY HERBS TO INCREASE YOUR MILK SUPPLY²**

You may know other moms who have used herbs and foods to increase their milk supply. Just know that it does not work for everyone. Also keep in mind that they may help in the beginning but may lose their effect overtime. Below are some herbs and foods that may help with milk letdown^{6, 7}.

TIPS OF THE WEEK

- Moms who are at an unhealthy weight may face challenges in producing milk.
- Some mom use herbs and food to increase milk supply but to date there is no evidence to support their use.
- Continuous breastfeeding is the best way to increase milk supply.

- **FENNEL** contains phytoestrogens which can aid in the letdown reflex.
- **ANISE** also has mild phytoestrogenic properties that can also aid in milk letdown.
- **RASPBERRY LEAF** is used to assist in milk letdown. It also helps the uterus recover after birth.
- **HOPS** can also aid in milk letdown, BUT alcohol temporarily prevents milk letdown and milk production, especially in large amounts.

COMMON HERBS AND FOODS WOMEN USE³⁻⁵

HERBS

- Mother's Tea (American)
- Fenugreek (North African, Indian, Chinese and Middle Eastern)
- Milk Thistle (European, American and South American)

FOODS

- Alfalfa (Persian, Southeast Asian and American)
- Oatmeal (Hispanic and African)
- Barley (American)
- Garlic (Indian)
- Ginger (Asian)

Talk to your medical provider before taking any herbs or foods. Frequent breastfeeding or pumping is the natural and safe way to increase your milk supply. You should continue to breastfeed a minimum of 8-12 times per day. Remember, you may be covered for a breast pump and visits with a lactation consultant through your medical insurance plan, WIC, Medi-Cal or the Affordable Care Act.



**IF YOU BREASTFEEDING HELP, CALL THE
HELP LINE: 888-278-6455**

RESOURCES:

Check out the *Breastfeeding and Pumping (Week 7)* lesson

nbc.ca/index.php?option=com_content&id=21:herbal-remedies-for-milk-supply&Itemid=17

healthonline.washington.edu/document/health_online/pdf/04-Low_Milk_Production_8_09.pdf

REFERENCES

1. Ethnic Awareness. California Department of Public Health. Retrieved from: <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/breastfeeding/documents/mo-ethnicdescriptions.pdf>
2. ABM Protocol. (2001). Protocol #9: Use of Galactogogues in Initiating or Augmenting Maternal Milk Supply. *Academy of Breastfeeding Protocol*, 6: 41-49.
3. Herbal Remedies for Milk Supply. (2009). International Breastfeeding Centre, Retrieved from <https://www.nbc.ca/>
4. The National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine. (2012). Milk Thistle, Retrieved from <http://nccam.nih.gov/health/milkthistle/atag glance.htm>
5. Vijayakumar, M., Singh, S., Chhipa, R., Bhat, M. (2005). The hypoglycaemic activity of fenugreek seed extract is mediated through the stimulation of an insulin signalling pathway. *British Journal of Pharmacology*, 146, 41-48.
6. Nice, F. & Luo, A. (2012). Medication and Breastfeeding: Current Concepts. *Journal of American Pharmacists Association*; 52:86-94. Retrieved from http://www.pfli.org/articles/2012jan_nice_japha.pdf
7. Zuppa, A., Sindico, P., Orchi, C., Carucci, C., Cardiello, V., Romagnoli, C., Catenazzi, P. (2010). Safety and Efficacy of Galactogogues: Substances that Induce, Maintain and Increase Breast Milk Production. *Journal of Pharm Pharmaceutical Sci*, 13, 162-174