

Breastfeeding: Overactive Letdown

For some breastfeeding mothers, it's normal for milk to leak or spray from the breasts. Sometimes the milk comes faster than the baby can suck and swallow. Leaking usually lasts only a short time until your milk supply and your baby adjust to each other.

Signs of overactive letdown

Mother

- Breasts leak large amounts of milk between feedings.
- Bra and clothes are almost always wet.
- While breastfeeding, your other breast may leak or spray milk.
- The letdown of milk may be painful.

Baby (newborn to three months)

- Spits up one to two mouthfuls of milk after most feeds.
- Gains weight very quickly.
- May have large amounts of normal, green, watery stools.
- May be gassy from air swallowed during feeds.
- Latches onto breast, may gulp, and often chokes or sputters after a few sucks.
- May become frustrated and squirm, arch the back, and pull off the breast.
- May come on and off the breast many times during a feed.
- May have a strong suck and nurse hurriedly once correctly latched.
- May behave as if very hungry, even if recently nursed.

Coping with overactive letdown and leaking

The letdown of too much milk too quickly is normal for some mothers and babies. If you still have signs of overactive letdown after your baby is three weeks of age, try these tips:

- Offer one breast at each feeding. If your baby wants to feed again shortly after a feed, return him to the same breast. If your other breast is uncomfortable while feeding, express a small amount of milk. Express only enough to be comfortable.
- It may be helpful to allow the first forceful sprays of milk to spray onto a towel. Latch your baby after the first spray decreases to drips.
- Burp your baby often.
- Try different positions such as football hold, side lying, and sitting facing you to help your baby cope with fast milk flow.
- Lean back while nursing to allow gravity to slow the flow of milk.

Comfort tips for mom

- Apply gentle pressure to your breasts in a self-hug for a few seconds to stop the leaking.
- Change your breast pads often.
- Continue to drink plenty of fluids, try to get enough rest, and eat well.
- If you need extra information or support, contact Client and Community Support at 1-800-265-7293 ext. 7006.