



# Helping a Parent to Relactate

During emergencies or after premature weaning, parents may want to relactate to provide additional breastmilk for a child that is currently receiving other sources of food as their main source of nutrition. Success depends on the parent's wellbeing and motivation, age of the baby (under six months is optimal), how long the parent has ceased breast/chest feeding and access to skilled lactation support.

## Assess

## Feed the Baby

## Determine Ounces Needed

## Support the Milk Supply

## Reassess & Support

One of your roles as a lactation consultant can be to provide information to your colleagues, other health care professionals and parents about the steps to relactation.

### Ask questions to **assess history and establish goals.**

Working with the family to determine their goals and set realistic expectations will set the stage for measuring progress and determining "success."

- Why does the parent want to relactate?
- How did breast/chest feeding end? Has that issue been resolved?
- What are the parents' goals for relactation?
- What is the parents' timeline for achieving their goal?

### The first rule of lactation support is to **feed the baby.**

Ask questions to establish the starting point for the relactation plan.

- How old is the baby?
- Is the baby currently nursing at the breast/chest?
  - What is the baby's behavior at the breast? Happy? Frustrated? Effective? Pacified?
- What is the baby being fed (formula, breastmilk, solid foods)?
- How much of each food is the baby receiving? If breastmilk, what percentage is from the parent?
- How is the baby currently being fed (breast/chest, bottle, spoon, cup)?

### Determine **ounces needed per 24 hours.**

If a baby is less than 4-6 months old, calculate needed intake per 24 hours using the equation below. Once a baby is 4-6 months or taking in approximately 32-35 ounces/900mls - 1L in a 24 hour period, their intake needs remain the same until consuming solids.

Baby's weight in kilos	X 150	= total mls needed every 24 hours
Example: Baby's weight in kilos = 4	X 150	= 600 mls needed every 24 hours
Baby's weight in pounds	X 2.5	= ounces needed every 24 hours
Example: Baby's weight = 8 lbs.	X 2.5	= 20 ounces needed every 24 hours

Compare ounces/mls needed per 24 hours to the amount of breastmilk the parent is able to provide. The gap between those two numbers is the target number of ounces/mls of increased milk production.

## Support the milk supply by developing a plan for frequent milk removal.

Remove milk from the breast

- Begin with three times in 24 hours (reassess with parent) and work up to 8+
- Engage parents' senses to increase milk output (sight, sound, smell, touch)
- Methods of milk removal can include
  - Pumping
  - Hand expression
  - Baby directly at breast, with or without a supplemental nursing system
- Discuss pharmaceutical and herbal options to increase milk production

Provide parent with an unbiased and reliable way to measure on the progress of milk production.

**Frequent reassessment and support** will ensure baby is growing and the parent is working towards their goals.

Follow up includes:

- Parent's opinion of the process and the current situation
- Baby's demeanor
- Baby's weight gain
- Parent's willingness to modify the plan/goals

Listening and affirming the parent's experience and progress will help them to determine the next steps forward.

Reducing the amount of supplement the baby receives may need to be a slow process. The baby's growth needs to be the top priority. If the baby is gaining appropriately, the non-breastmilk supplement can be reduced by 1-2 ounces every 3-4 days. Continued monitoring of baby's weight and demeanor are important to the success of this gradual weaning.

Provide the parent with support and encouragement throughout the process. Follow-up every 2-3 days during the first week, then every 3-4 days until the parent has met their goal. There will be peaks and valleys along the way. Share your confidence in their success. Your guidance and support can build food security in emergencies and help families achieve their relactation goals.

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Resources

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