

# Help for moms who battle to breastfeed

**A balanced diet, with some substances, is key for the continued flow of milk.**

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New mothers are bombarded with the message that “breast is best” for their infants, but what can be done for those who struggle to breastfeed despite their best intentions?

International breastfeeding advocacy group La Leche League said problems range from babies who experience trouble latching to women who don't produce enough milk.

For World Breastfeeding Week, from August 1 to August 7, lactation specialist and nutritionist Desiree Schreiber offered advice to mothers facing these challenges.

Schreiber, the unit manager at Little Life Clinic in Southernwood, East London, started by rubbishing the myth that

women with small breasts generally have a smaller milk supply than women with bigger breasts.

According to Schreiber, effective breastfeeding starts with correct placement and latching of the baby on the breast. If the baby is well positioned or latched on the breast, they are able to feed effectively and promote adequate milk supply.

She said the more a mother fed her baby, the more milk her body would produce. “There are hormones involved during pregnancy which govern a complex sequence of events which prepare the breast for lactation,” Schreiber explained.

“Should there be a disturbance in the duration of a pregnancy due to illness or an emergency and the baby is born earlier than expected, the mother may experience challenges with milk production.

“Production of milk is withheld until after delivery, when

the levels of oestrogen fall.

“Then a hormone called prolactin takes over and is responsible for milk production.”

Schreiber said continual feeding of the baby or emptying the breast by expressing or using a breast pump encouraged the release of prolactin, and therefore milk production, on the

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principle of supply and demand. Doctors could prescribe medication if challenges persisted, she added.

“Every mother is unique and can try different ways of boosting milk production, including eating and drinking certain food types that are said to increase the production of breast

milk. Ultimately, a balanced diet is necessary for the mother's own nutritional needs during this challenging period.”

Professor Lisanne du Plessis, Association for Dietetics South Africa spokesperson, who is a registered nutritionist, warned that diet alone could not increase milk supply.

However, she said mothers could make use of substances known as galactogues, studied for their potential to stimulate breast milk production, which included the anti-psychotic medication Eglonyl and the herbs fenugreek and blessed thistle.

Du Plessis said a breastfeeding mother could consume alcohol but in moderation.

“When a breastfeeding mother drinks occasionally or limits her consumption to one drink or less per day, the amount of alcohol her baby receives has not been proven to be harmful.”