

A Rapid Let Down

Infants who are breastfeeding with a mother who is dealing with a rapid let down (also referred to as MER or milk ejection reflex) often gulp loudly at the beginning of a feed, choke or gag, pull off and cry, make clicking sounds (although there are several other causes for clicking) and may even cause nipple pain by pressing their tongue on the nipple to slow the milk flow. Because they get too much milk too fast, these babies may be fussy and gassy or have nasal congestion from milk in their nose. Some nursing parents who have a rapid MER also have an abundant milk supply. Distinguishing between the two is important, since suggestions for reducing an abundant milk supply could be detrimental to breastfeeding if a mother simply has a rapid MER along with a normal volume of milk. Your lactation consultant will be able to help guide you with the best recommendations for your situation.

Several nursing techniques have been found to help baby deal with the fast milk flow, or rapid let down/MER. It is important to keep the baby's head higher than their bottom, or positioning baby "uphill" in relation to mother's breast. Holding baby in upright and tummy down positions often work best. A few examples are as follows:

- Cradle hold but with mom leaning back (a recliner or lots of pillows helps)
- Football hold, but with mom leaning back
- Baby sitting up and facing mom to nurse instead of lying down (good for nursing in public).
- Side lying position – this allows baby to dribble the extra milk out of her mouth when it's coming too fast
- Laid back positioning- in this position, mom is reclining comfortably and baby is on top (facing down), tummy to tummy with mom.

The mother may also find it helpful to compress and hold her breast or press down with the flat or side of her hand, in order to block some milk ducts during letdown.

It can be useful to hand express a small amount of milk before feeds, or take baby off the breast once the letdown occurs while at the same time catching the milk in a towel or cloth diaper. Once the flow slows, you can put your baby back to the breast.

Many parents feel burping baby frequently is helpful, if baby seems to be swallowing air with feedings. Sometimes babies of Moms with fast let-down get very used to the fast flow and object when it is normally slows somewhere between 3 weeks to 3 months. Visit with your lactation consultant if new concerns arise.



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