

Fenugreek Use in Breastfeeding

Fenugreek seeds are a supplement often found in foods such as pancake syrups and curry dishes. Fenugreek is on the U.S. government "GRAS" list ("Generally Regarded as Safe").

Benefits of Fenugreek: Fenugreek helps PROMOTE BREAST MILK SUPPLY. It may also reduce skin blemishes, promote healthy hair, improve cholesterol, and decrease the risk of low iron (anemia).

Unfortunately, Fenugreek may not help supply issues secondary to poor milk removal (shallow latch, oro-motor issues, like tongue tie) OR insufficient breast stimulation (most women need 120 minutes/day minimum in the first 3 weeks).

How does it work? Fenugreek seeds contain hormone precursors that increase the body's ability to secrete the hormone prolactin. Prolactin is necessary to produce breastmilk. Fenugreek stimulates the mammary glands and greatly improves breast milk supply. It further helps in easing milk "let-down". The benefits are often noticed within 3 days of starting Fenugreek.

In general, Fenugreek:

- Improves breastmilk production
- Promotes breastmilk "let down" and "ejection"
- Aids in your baby's digestion (and may improve infant colic)

Suggested Dosage:

Fenugreek capsules (580 mg - 610 mg)

- Start by taking 1-2 capsules 3x/day with fluids and a meal
- Then, increase to 3-4 capsules 3x/day (maximum of 15 capsules daily)
- Skipping doses will decrease efficacy

Fenugreek tea (alone or as an ingredient in "Mother's Milk Tea")

- Minimum of 3-4 cups per day are needed to increase milk volume

Who should avoid Fenugreek:

- Pregnant women, as this may cause uterine contractions
- Mothers with persistent asthma as it can worsen asthma symptoms
- Mothers who are sensitive to nuts or legumes
- Mothers whose babies are getting ready to have a surgical procedure such as a circumcision, as it can prolong PTT.
- Mothers who are on anti-hypertension medications as it may further lower blood pressure
- Diabetics should use caution as Fenugreek can cause hypoglycemia (low sugar)