

Breast Feeding - Hand/Mechanical Milk Expression

Milk expression may be done for many reasons:

- To supply breast milk while mother and baby are separated
- To increase milk supply
- To prevent or ease engorgement

Your milk supply will be just right for your baby if you either breastfeed or express milk. Milk production is based on supply and demand. The more you pump or the more your baby nurses the more milk your body will produce. Plan to pump at least 8 times in 24 hours. Use the pump for 10-15 minutes per breast. You can single pump each breast or pump both breasts at the same time depending on the type of pump you are using. Plan to pump every 2 to 3 hours during the day and go no longer than a 4 hour interval at night. Some mothers find it difficult to express milk, although their babies are getting enough milk when they nurse. Be patient with yourself and don't become discouraged.

Preparing to express



- Wash your hands well. Wash all equipment as recommended by manufacturer.
- If possible, express in a quiet, restful place. Imagine you are in a pleasant place. Think nice thoughts about your baby. Your ability to relax will lead to a better milk supply.
- Apply moist heat (like a warm washcloth) to your breasts for 3 to 5 minutes before expressing.
- Massage your breast in a circular pattern, followed by light stroking of the breast from the outer edges toward the nipple.
- Gently stimulate your nipples by drawing them out or rolling them between your fingers.

Hand expression



- Express your milk into a clean container (hard plastic or glass).
- Place your thumb pad above the nipple at the edge of the areola (dark area around nipple), and place your first two finger pads below the nipple at the edge of the areola forming the letter "C" with your hand.
- Press straight into the chest wall, and then gently press your thumb and fingers together (just behind the areola). Roll your thumb and fingers forward as if making thumb and fingerprints at the same time.
- Rotate the position of your fingers around the breast to repeat the cycle (position, press, and roll) several times on each breast. Use both hands on each breast.

See the back side of this sheet for additional information!



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Hand expression cont: →

- Alternate breasts every 5 minutes or when the milk flow slows. Remember to repeat the massage, stroke and express cycle several times on each breast.
- Apply a few drops of breast milk onto each nipple and allow to air dry after you finish expressing.

Mechanical expression: →

- Follow the general instructions that come with your breast pump.
- The flow of your milk will vary. During the first few minutes it may drip out slowly, and then squirt with force after you have a milk ejection. This pattern will repeat several times while you are expressing each breast.
- Apply a few drops of breast milk onto each nipple and allow to air dry after you finish expressing.

General information and helpful tips: →

- The amount of milk you express may vary each time. This is not unusual. Your milk will look different while you are expressing. The first few teaspoons will look clear. After you have a milk ejection, your milk will look creamy white. Some medication, foods and vitamins may change the color of your breast milk.
- The milk fat will rise to the top of the milk when it is stored.
- You can purchase your own hands-free bra or make your own out of a sports bra. This will allow you to complete breast massage and compression throughout pumping. It can also aide in relaxation.
- Visit <http://newborns.stanford.edu/Breastfeeding/HandExpression.html> to view a video demonstrating hand expression of breast milk.

For further information on secondhand smoke and quitting smoking, please see “Passive Smoking” Parenting Card.

For further questions on maternal diet while breastfeeding please call the Children’s Mercy Hospital Lactation Management Program Help Line at (816) 346-1309.