

Hand Expression and Breast Pumps

Reasons to hand express or pump:

- To have breast milk available when mother and baby are not together
- To increase milk supply
- To prevent or help with breast fullness and discomfort

Your milk supply will be just right for your baby if you breastfeed or pump. How much milk you make is based on supply and demand. The more you pump or the more your baby nurses the more milk your body will make.

How often and how much do I pump?

- Pump at least 8 times in 24 hours
- Pump for 10-15 minutes per breast
- You can pump one breast or pump both breasts at the same time depending on the type of pump you are using
- Pump every 2 to 3 hours during the day and go no longer than 4 hours at night

Some mothers find it hard to express milk, even if their babies are getting enough milk when they nurse. Be patient with yourself and don't get discouraged.

Preparing to express milk:

- Wash your hands well
- If possible, express in a quiet, restful place. Try to relax and imagine you are in a pleasant place. Think nice thoughts about your baby. Relaxing can help you make more milk
- Apply moist heat (like a warm washcloth) to your breasts for 3 to 5 minutes before expressing
- Massage by moving your fingers in circles around your breast. Then use your fingers to stroke lightly from the outer parts of your breast towards the nipple
- Gently pull or roll your nipples between your fingers to get the nipple to stick out

Hand Expression:

- Express your milk into a clean container (hard plastic or glass)
- Place your thumb above the nipple at the edge of the areola (dark area around nipple). Then place your first two fingers below the nipple at the edge of the areola. Your hand should look like the letter "C"
- Press straight back into the chest wall. 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. Hold for a few seconds and then relax
- Rotate your fingers around the breast and repeat the cycle (position, press, and roll) several times on each breast. Use both hands on each breast
- Change breasts every 5 minutes or when the milk flow slows. Repeat the massage, stroke and express cycle several times on each breast
- Apply a few drops of breast milk on each nipple and allow to air dry after you finish

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Using a breast pump:

- Clean and set up pump parts using the instructions that came with your pump
- Center the flange (the part that looks like a funnel) on your nipple and begin pumping
- For electric breast pumps, follow instructions on how to turn on and use the pump. Some pumps have automatic cycles and only one button or knob. Some pumps may have different buttons/knobs for different cycles
- The flow of your milk will vary. During the first few minutes it may drip out slowly and then squirt with force after your milk lets down. This pattern may 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:

- The amount of milk you express may be different each time. This is not unusual
- Your milk will look different while you are expressing. The first few teaspoons may look clear, then it will change to a creamy white. Some medications, 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 in the refrigerator
- You can purchase your own hands-free bra or make your own out of a sports bra. This will allow you to massage and compress your breasts while pumping. It can also help you relax
- Visit <https://med.stanford.edu/newborns/professional-education/breastfeeding/maximizing-milk-production.html> to view a video on hand expression of breast milk

Please call the Breastfeeding and Pumping Helpline (816) 346-1309 if you have questions.

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