

EXPRESSING BREAST MILK

Expressing breast milk is when you use your hands or a breast pump to get the milk from your breasts. Whether you use your hands, or a pump is dependent on how long you have been breastfeeding, the reason you are expressing and how often you are going to express.

The first milk you produce after your baby is born is called colostrum. If you need to express milk at this stage it is best done by hand. During the first week, as your breasts feel fuller, you may choose whether you wish to continue expressing by hand or to use a pump. The number of times you will need to express per day will depend on your circumstances. For example, if your newborn baby is not feeding from the breast at all then you need to express frequently to establish and maintain your supply (8-10 times a day), but once your supply is established you may be able to reduce the number of times you express.

Important points to remember

- Expressing should be done gently to avoid pain and discomfort
- The use of gentle breast massage and nipple stimulation will help to encourage the milk flow
- Using relaxation techniques or thinking about your baby while expressing may also be helpful
- Expressing frequently throughout a 24-hour period (including overnight) is more effective in stimulating your milk supply than expressing for a long period of time at one sitting.

Reasons for expressing

There are a number of reasons why you may need to express breast milk, such as:

- Your baby is unable to attach at the breast or is not sucking effectively
- You are separated from your baby e.g. baby is premature or sick, or you are unwell
- To soften full breasts to make it easier for your baby to attach
- To allow healing after nipple damage (this may not be necessary after attachment is improved)
- If your milk supply is low
- To clear blocked areas and prevent mastitis
- To maintain milk flow during mastitis
- You are returning to work or are going out and will miss a feed

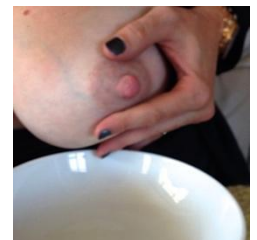
HAND EXPRESSING

When to hand express

- Express small amounts of colostrum to tempt a sleepy baby in the early stages of breastfeeding.
- When breasts are full baby can struggle to attach so being able to hand express some milk will soften the breast making it easier for your baby to attach
- Clear a blocked duct
- When you are separated from your baby for example if your baby is in the neonatal unit or if you are out without your baby. Ideally expressing should begin within the first six hours.
- Expressing frequently (8-10 times in a 24-hour period including overnight) will establish and maintain your milk supply
- If your nipples are sore or damaged, hand expressing tends to be the gentlest way of expressing breast milk. You can use a pump but make sure it is set to a low suction level.

Follow the following prompts to effectively hand express your breast milk.

1. Clean your hands prior to expressing and have a clean container with a wide opening ready
2. To help your milk to flow
 - a. Relax – skin to skin, cuddle, gentle breast massage (kneading with knuckles, stroking whatever feels comfortable)
 - b. Try to connect with your baby – look at your baby, listen to them, look at a photo, etc
3. Hand Expression:
 - a. *Finger position.* Position your dominant hand in a “c” shape, with the pads of the thumb and index finger either side of the areola. Make sure the nipple is in the middle of the thumb and the index finger. You can move your fingers back from the areola if need be, just make sure you are not squeezing the nipple directly.



- b. **1) PRESS.** Push straight back into the chest wall



- c. **2) COMPRESS.** Roll thumb and fingers together (Do not slide or roll fingers down toward the nipple – just compress down and together)



- d. **3) RELAX.** Let pressure go.



- e. *REPEAT until flow slows to drips* – Think: PRESS, COMPRESS, RELAX, PRESS, COMPRESS, RELAX... Move your fingers around the areola expressing from different areas of the breast for example start at 12 and 6 o'clock then move to 11 and 5 o'clock and so on. *NOTE: It may take a few cycles of press, compress, relax to see milk appearing from the nipple. Be patient, stay relaxed and continue trying!*
4. Switch to the other breast and repeat. If you are expressing because your supply is low, switch back to the first breast again. By switching back and forth, you will increase your supply over time.

Here are some wonderful videos to guide you when hand expressing:

- <http://globalhealthmedia.org/portfolio-items/how-to-express-breastmilk/?portfolioID=10861>
- <http://newborns.stanford.edu/Breastfeeding/HandExpression.html>
- <http://www.unicef.org.uk/BabyFriendly/Resources/AudioVideo/Hand-expression/>

EXPRESSING USING A PUMP

Once your milk has “come in” you may find it easier to express breast milk with a breast pump, either manual or electric. It is important to follow the manufacturer’s directions regarding use, cleaning and sterilisation.

How to use a hand pump

1. Stimulate the nipple by hand and start the milk flow by hand expressing
 2. Place the pump shield centrally over the nipple and hold it gently to the breast. Ensure that you are not digging the shield into your breast.
 3. Use at high speed but low suction at first
 4. Once the milk is flowing, slow the speed down to medium and increase the suction to a comfortable level for you
 5. Your nipple should move freely in the pump shield, with little or none of your areola being pulled into the pump shield.
 6. Express 10-20 minutes in total or until the flow has reduced to drops
- There should be no pain or discomfort
 - Double pumping (pumping both breasts at once) will decrease the time needed to express. It is recommended for longer term expressing and for mothers with twins or triplets.



Guidelines for storage of breast milk at home

Breast Milk Status	Room Temperature (26° or lower)	Refrigerator (4° or lower)	Freezer
Freshly expressed into container	6-8 hours. If refrigerator is available store milk there	3-5 days – store at back of fridge where it is the coolest	6-12 months in deep freeze (-18° or lower)
Previously frozen, thawed in refrigerator but not warmed	4 hours or less- that is, the next feed	24 hours	Do not refreeze
Thawed outside refrigerator in warm water	For completion of feeding	4 hours or until next feed	Do not refreeze
Infant has begun feeding	Only for completion of feeding	Discard	Discard

