



Breast Pumping

How do I Pump?

Pumping of the breasts is done for a number of reasons: over-full breasts, during a period of separation from the child because of work or travel, for a sick or premature child who cannot nurse, to increase the milk supply, by adoptive mothers, or by mothers who wish to resume nursing after stopping.

There are two ways for you to remove milk from the breast. One way is to manually express and the other is by pumping. These methods are equally effective but many mothers will develop a preference for one over the other.

Tell me about pumps.

There are two pump types: manual and electric:

Electric pumps: Some electric pumps are rented and some are meant for purchase. The electric rental pumps are best used if there is to be regular repeated pumping such as for a baby in the hospital. The rental pumps are usually better quality than the ones you buy.

Currently, we like the rental Medela Symphony pump. The older style Medela Lactina and the Egnell are still available for rental and can be used in a pinch. Mothers who rent the electric can save time by pumping both breasts at the same time by connecting two funnels to the pump. These pumps should come with detailed instructions. Pumps are rented and you purchase the attachments. While this can add up, in general pump rental is less expensive than the cost of formula. In addition, your baby will be healthier.

Manual pumps: These are generally used if there is to be occasional use such as an evening out or for a mother who is returning to work. Every mother is different and you need to find what works for you.

The Medela Harmony pump is the best manual pump; it is easy to use, is very effective, and only needs one hand to operate. It sells for \$65 to \$70.



How do I start?

Before you use your pump for the first time, wash the parts that will be in contact with your breast and the milk, with hot soapy water.

Pumping is a skill that must be learned—just like swimming. Don't be discouraged at any point. At first, getting one ounce after thirty minutes is a good result! With time and practice, this amount will usually increase. An average mother makes one ounce (30 ml) per hour in total or about 24 ounces per 24 hour period. So if you are pumping every three hours, you want to get at least 3 oz per pumping. Pumped milk amounts can vary from pumping to pumping. Also remember that pumping is not nearly as efficient as your baby and pumping can be a very poor test of the amount of milk you can make.

How do I get a let-down?

The pump works by creating and maintaining a negative pressure outside of the breast. You must have a let-down to get the milk forward through the breast to the area where the pump can remove it. If there is no let-down, you will not get much milk with pumping. Turning up the suction strength will not increase the amount of milk; it will only traumatize the nipple and areola. Some mothers do find they need a higher suction strength to obtain milk. Just experiment.

There are a number of things that you can do to produce a let-down. Get comfortable and relax. Pick a non-stressful time and place. Try thinking about the baby, looking at a picture of him or her, or having the baby with or on you.

Breast massage is the best way to increase the amount of milk you can pump. Massage techniques vary from mother to mother and you will probably have to experiment to see what works the best for you. You can also tickle the breast with very light strokes using your fingers or try a little warmth or blow on the breast. Some mothers find heat helps the let-down. You can also try pumping one breast while baby is nursing the other side. This often produces the most pumped milk.

How and when do I use the pump?

If you are using an electric pump, start with the lowest suction setting. Only increase the strength if you have had a let-down and the pump is not able to bring out the milk. You should also start your manual pump with a low setting. Make sure that the pump is not hurting you.

You should pump for roughly 20 minutes per side — longer if the milk keeps flowing. You should pump roughly on the same schedule that the baby has for breastfeeding — usually every three hours day and night. You can have one five-hour sleep.



Tell me about storing my milk..

Milk is best stored in a clean air-tight container. It can be glass or plastic. Canning jars, baby food jars or little jam jars are ideal. Try to keep the amount of milk in each container small to ensure less wasting. Do not re-freeze thawed milk. Label the milk with the date and use the oldest first. Fresh milk can be kept for 2 days in a refrigerator, 6 months in an upstairs freezer and 12 months in a downstairs freezer.

Thaw or warm up the milk using warm water. Microwaving will destroy the white blood cells in fresh milk and can change the chemical nature of frozen milk. It can also create hot pockets that can burn the baby.

Any other points?

Breast milk will separate. Breast milk is not homogenized and will separate if left standing. There will be a layer of fat on top of the milk. This is normal. It does not mean that the milk has gone bad. Remember to lightly shake the milk after thawing. This will help to mix the separated layers. If you shake too hard or too long, the milk may curdle.

Breast milk can change in smell with freezing. This is because of the milk fat saponifying. This does not mean that the milk is bad, only that it has aged. This might account for a small number of babies turning up their noses at frozen milk. However, this milk is still of excellent quality.

Breast milk will look thinner and more like skim milk with time. This is normal. The decrease in the richness of breast milk is designed to keep up with the increasing need for fluids as your baby becomes more active.

Babies can start preferring bottles to breastfeeding. The more bottling, the higher the chance of this happening. Try to use the pump to help with the breastfeeding, not interfere with it.