

Expressing and Storing Breast Milk

Helpful tips

If you are having problems with breastfeeding, or if you need to be away from your baby for more than a few hours, hand expressing or pumping can allow your baby to be fed your breast milk.

Breastfeeding gets off to the best start when babies feed only at the breast for the first month or so. During this time, your baby will learn to attach to your breast and take the amount of milk needed for each feeding. Your breasts respond by refilling and producing the right amount of milk based on how much your baby drinks. Your milk supply adjusts to meet your baby's demands.

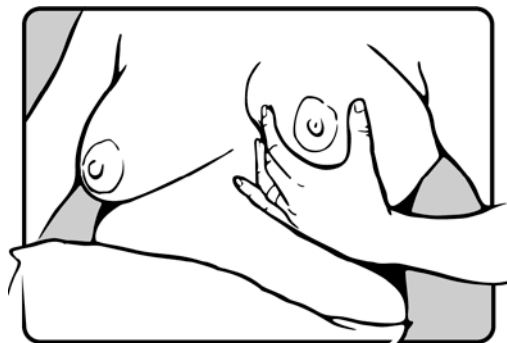
When breastfeeding is going well, there is usually no need to pump. But, when you are sure that your baby is attaching easily, nursing well, and gaining weight, there may be times when you choose to hand express or pump milk for a bottle feeding. Pumping or expressing can be very helpful for working mothers who are away from their babies.

Hand Expression

Hand expression is a helpful skill. With practice, many women are able to take milk out of their breasts very well this way. Some women even learn to express from both breasts at the same time.

Here are the steps to follow when hand expressing:

- First, scoop your hand under your breast. Place your finger and thumb on the edge of your areola in a “U” shape.
- While pressing your fingers and hand into your breast, move your fingers toward your thumb and hold for a few seconds. Repeat this motion several times to start milk dripping or flowing.
- Then move your thumb and finger to a “C” position and repeat.



To hand express, first place your finger and thumb on the edge of your areola in a “U” shape.



A breast pump will help you collect your breast milk quickly and easily.

To watch a helpful video about breast massage and hand expression, visit <http://bfmedneo.com/our-services/breast-massage>.

When should I use a breast pump?

Most women find that using a good breast pump is the best way to collect milk for bottle feedings. Even if you have a busy work schedule, if you take milk from your breasts often and well, your breasts can keep making all the milk your baby needs.

There are also other reasons for pumping. It is very important to ask for help and start breast pumping if:

- Your baby has lost more than 10% of their birth weight
- You have a low milk supply
- You have nipple pain or breast pain that causes problems with breastfeeding
- Your baby is preterm or in the hospital
- Your baby cannot breastfeed

What will I see when I pump?

As your nipple and surrounding breast are gently pulled into the plastic breast pump set, you will probably see milk drip from several *ducts* (small openings) in your nipple. A *hormone* (a natural substance inside your body) is released early in a pumping session. The hormone *oxytocin* causes the let-down reflex to allow milk to spray from the ducts.

Some women describe a tingling sensation with let-down. The milk looks white and sometimes thin in the first minutes of pumping. It usually looks thicker by the end of the session. It looks different from the clear or yellow colostrum you may have seen in the first days after your baby was born. It is all good milk. Sometimes one breast produces more milk than the other breast. Usually this is not a problem.

How often do I pump?

To keep up your full milk supply when you are away, plan on pumping around your baby's feeding times. Pumping tells your breasts to make the amount of milk your baby needs. Your breasts will start to make less milk if they remain "full" for too

long. This is why you should rarely go more than 4 hours between feedings or pumping sessions in the first 1 or 2 months.

Most women find that 10 to 15 minutes of double pumping will “empty” their breasts. If you are using a single pump, it could take 15 minutes or longer for each side.

How do I store breast milk? How long does it keep? Can I freeze it?

- When you have just expressed your milk and you are going to feed it to your baby within 6 hours, you can leave the breast milk out of the refrigerator, if the room is cooler than 77°F (25°C).
- If you will be using the milk within a week, you can store it in a glass or plastic container in the refrigerator.
- You can store breast milk for 6 months in a freezer that freezes ice cream solid, or up to 12 months in deep freeze (-4°F or -20°C).
- Milk can be frozen in glass or BPA-free plastic containers. If you use plastic bottles or bags, protect them from punctures. Allow room in the containers for the milk to expand as it freezes.

An easy way to remember safe storage for breast milk is the “**Rule of 6**”:

- Fresh milk is safe at room temperature for **6 hours**.
- Chilled milk is safe in the refrigerator for **6 days**.
- Frozen milk is safe in the freezer for **6 months**.

If you have warmed milk from storing any of these ways, use it within **1 hour**.

How do I thaw frozen breast milk?

- Thaw containers of frozen milk in the refrigerator or in a bowl of hot **but not boiling** water. Using hot water is also a good way to warm chilled milk.
- Do **not** use a microwave to thaw or warm breast milk. Some healthy benefits of the milk may be affected, and hot spots can occur from uneven heating.
- Once milk is thawed, use it within 24 hours and do not refreeze it. Storage guidelines may be different for preterm babies or babies who are in the hospital.



Rule of 6

- Fresh milk is safe at room temperature for **6 hours**.
- Chilled milk is safe in the refrigerator for **6 days**.
- Frozen milk is safe in the freezer for **6 months**.

How do I get a breast pump?

Almost all insurance companies include breast pumps as one of the benefits for new mothers. Call your insurance company to find out how your insurance can help you get a pump.

If you get services from WIC, you may be able to get a pump from your WIC clinic.

UW Medicine does not rent or sell pumps or pump equipment. But, we can help answer questions as needed.

Which breast pump is best for me?

Rental Pumps

Hospital grade pumps are the best-quality pumps. Since they are very costly, most mothers rent them, if needed.

Most women find that they collect more milk in less time when they use a hospital-grade pump. This can be very important if your baby is premature or if your baby is in the hospital and you cannot be together.

Double Electric Pumps

These pumps work well when your milk supply is well established or when you only need to use the pump a few times a day. An electric pump can be very helpful when you are returning to work after your baby is born. Most people buy double electric pumps rather than renting them.

Hand Pumps

Hand pumps are meant to be used once in a while. They are less costly but also slower than other kinds of pumps. This may be the type of pump you choose if your baby is breastfeeding well and often, and you are rarely away from your baby.

Questions?

Your questions are important.

If you have questions about expressing and storing milk, please call Lactation Services at 206.598.4628.

Now, please go back to the Table of Contents in this workbook and check the box so your nurses will know you have read this chapter.