



USING A BREAST PUMP

When breastfeeding directly from the breast isn't possible, expressing your breasts is the next best option. This can be done by hand or using a breast pump.

In addition to providing for your baby's immediate needs, expressing helps establish an adequate milk supply for when your baby can feed from your breast.

Hand expressing combined with using an electric pump has been shown to increase the amount of breast milk you produce. Expressing quite frequently (at least 8-12 times in 24 hours) is the most effective way to establish a milk supply that is adequate for your baby to continue breastfeeding.

Sometimes it can be difficult to express breastmilk. Try sitting in a quiet, comfortable place with some water or a hot drink. If separated from your baby having a photograph to look at may be helpful.

When your baby is born earlier than expected or is unwell, providing your breast milk for feeds is very important.

For more information see *Expressing for sick or premature babies*.

Expressing by hand

Before using a breast pump start by expressing your milk by hand.

1. Place warm packs or flannels on your breast to help the milk 'let-down' (starting to flow).
2. Gently massage your breast downward toward the nipple then gently press around the areola inward with the thumb and forefingers.
3. Compress gently to roll the nipple between your fingers.
4. Repeat these movements for several minutes and a drop of milk may appear.
5. After a few minutes of hand expressing start to use the breast pump.

Using a hand pump

1. Start by expressing by hand as described.
2. Place the pump shield centrally over your nipple and hold it firmly against your breast, without digging in.
3. Use the pump gently but quickly at first – this helps with the let-down reflex and mimics what your baby does when they first start a breastfeed.
4. Once the milk is flowing use a slower speed but stronger suction.

Using an electric pump

1. Start by expressing by hand as described.
2. Place the appropriately sized pump shields centrally over your nipple/s and hold them firmly against your breasts, without digging in.
3. Adjust the pump suction levels so that your breasts are quite comfortable.
4. Use at high speed but low suction at first (or if using a pump with an automatic speed setting see manufacturer's instructions).
5. Once the milk is flowing, slow the speed back to medium.
6. Increase the suction to a level that is comfortable for you, this helps the milk flow well and avoids damage to your nipples and areola.
7. Your nipple should move freely in the pump shield without your areola being pulled into it.
8. Express for the duration of the pump program or for 10–20 mins total or until your milk flow is reduced to drops.

If you are unsure about the breast shield fit, or if it is not comfortable, or you are experiencing any pain and discomfort when using the pump, seek advice from a breastfeeding specialist.

Double pumping (expressing both breasts at once) will decrease the time needed to express. It is recommended for longer term expressing and for mothers of twins or other multiples.

Expressing with a double electric pump kit

1. **Follow steps 1–6 of using an electric pump.**
2. When you are ready, place the second pump shield over your other nipple.
3. Express for 10–15 minutes total or until your milk flow is reduced to drops.

Some mothers find that expressing both breasts by hand for a minute or so after using the pump helps to get a few extra mls and help maintain their milk supply.

At any time, you can use the pump as a single pump if you prefer.

If you experience any pain or discomfort when using a breast pump, seek advice from a breastfeeding specialist.

Purchasing a breast pump

There are various things you should consider before purchasing a breast pump.

- If feeding is going well you may not need to purchase a pump.
- There is no need to purchase a pump while you are pregnant – it is best to wait and see if you need one and if you do which type will best suit your needs.
- Hand or manual pumps are intended for occasional use – no more than 2–3 times a day.
- Some hand pumps can be used with electric breast pumps.
- Electric pumps are for more frequent use, for example, more than 3 times a day or for a long period of time.
- If you have a premature baby it is best to use an electric breast pump.
- How often you use a pump will determine which is the correct type for you.

Before hiring or purchasing any pump equipment get advice from a breastfeeding specialist.

Breast pumps can be hired or purchased from:

- Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA)
T: 1800 686 268 – Breastfeeding Helpline
www.breastfeeding.asn.au/view/hire-breast-pump

An ABA breastfeeding counsellor will help you organise breast pump hire and any question you may have about using the pump, expressing and storing your breastmilk.

- Equipment Distribution Centre
The Royal Children’s Hospital
T: (03) 9345 5325 or visit www.rch.org.au/edc
- Many pharmacies hire and sell breast pumps.

Cleaning the breast pump equipment

- Wash your hands thoroughly.
- Dismantle all pieces of the breast pump kit after each use.
- Rinse with cold water all parts that come in contact with breast milk
- Wash in warm water and dishwashing detergent
- Rinse thoroughly under warm running water
- Allow to air dry while draining on clean paper towel before storing in a clean closed container or plastic bag.
- It is recommended that the equipment is sterilised daily if your baby is in a Special Care Nursery.
- The equipment can be sterilised daily by using
 - a process such as boiling (see below)
 - chemical solution (follow manufacturer’s directions)
 - a home steam steriliser (follow manufacturer’s directions).

Boiling method of disinfection

- Wash hands thoroughly
- Thoroughly clean all parts as above
- Completely immerse all parts of the breast pump kit in water, bring to the boil and continue to boil rapidly (completely submerged) for five minutes uninterrupted
- Remove the items without touching the inside of the containers. Long handled tongs, which have been sterilised along with the breast pump kit, may be useful

Allow to air dry while draining on clean paper towel before storing in a clean closed container or plastic bag.

Guidelines for storage of breastmilk at home

Breast milk status	Room temperature (26°C or lower)	Refrigerator (4°C or lower)	Freezer
Freshly expressed into container	6–8 hours If refrigerator is available store milk there	3–5 days Store at back where it is coldest	2 weeks in freezer compartment inside refrigerator 3 months in freezer section of refrigerator with separate door 6–12 months in deep freeze (-18°C or lower)
Previously frozen thawed in refrigerator but not warmed	4 hours or less – that is, the next feeding	24 hours	Do not refreeze
Thawed outside refrigerator in warm water	For completion of feeding	4 hours or until next feeding	Do not refreeze
Infant has begun feeding	Only for completion of feeding	Discard	Discard

Where to get more information

Your local Maternal & Child Health Nurse (MCHN)

Your local council breastfeeding clinic (ask MCHN for details or check council website)

Victorian Maternal & Child Health Line (24 hours)

T: 13 22 29

Australian Breastfeeding Association

T: 1800 686 268 – Breastfeeding Helpline

W: www.breastfeeding.asn.au

Related fact sheets on the Women's website

- Expressing breast milk
- Expressing breast milk for sick or premature babies