

Expressing Breastmilk POSTNATAL

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Expressing and Collecting Breastmilk

It is important for you to know how to express your breastmilk.

There are many reasons why you may need to express milk for your baby including;

- If you are separated from your baby
- You are unable to give a breastfeed at the time your baby wants to feed
- Your baby has difficulties attaching and is wanting a feed
- To soften your areola (darkened skin around nipple) to make attaching easier
- To increase your milk supply
- To give your baby extra breastmilk

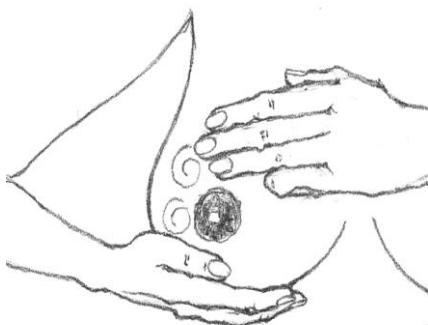
If you are both breastfeeding and expressing **always feed your baby first prior to expressing.**

There are 3 methods of expressing:

1. by hand
2. using a hand pump
3. using an electric breast pump

1. Collecting breastmilk by hand

- Wash hands
- Use a sterilised container
- Starting from the top of breast stroking towards the nipple, gently massage the breast



- Hold the sterilised container under the base of the nipple to collect the milk
- Cup the breast with the thumb and finger diagonally opposite behind the areola



- Push your fingers back into the chest wall
- Then bring your thumb and forefinger together behind the areola.

- Repeat in a rhythmic action
- Move fingers around the nipples as breastmilk flow stops

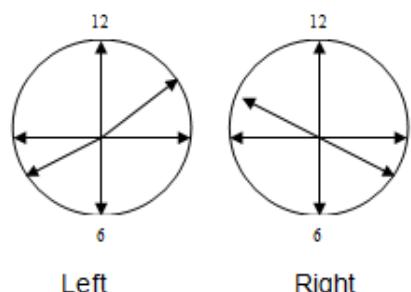


Diagram 3: Three positions for manual expression of breastmilk

- Repeat on the other breast
- Avoid rubbing or pulling breast tissue when hand expressing
- It is usual to express very small amounts in the first few days after the birth of your baby. We recommend that you express for 5 – 10 minutes on each side to stimulate milk production.
- Some women find they can collect more milk if they switch from side to side frequently when they are expressing.

Video resource:

<https://www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly/baby-friendly-resources/breastfeeding-resources/hand-expression-video/>

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2. Hand Pumps

Hand pumps are portable and relatively inexpensive. They are recommended when a woman is breastfeeding and needs to express **occasionally** when away from her baby.

Many types are available and should be used according to the manufacturer's instructions.

To increase the volume expressed you can try switching from side to side until breastmilk stops flowing.

3. Electric breast pump

Electric breast pumps are recommended when:

- Mothers are expressing frequently and/or for an extended period.
- Mothers are not getting enough milk by other expression methods.
- Mothers needing to increase their breastmilk supply

Steps to follow when using a breast pump:

- Wash hands.
- Have the sterilised pump equipment ready.
- Gently massage the breast, starting from the top stroking towards the nipple
- Place the correct size breast cup on the areola, centring the nipple.

- Operate the breast pump according to manufacturer's instructions
- Pour the milk into a sterilised storage container, and put in the refrigerator or freezer

For Storage of breastmilk refer to Factsheet Storing and transport of Breastmilk at Home

Expressing instead of a breastfeed - we recommend you express for at least 15 – 20 minutes on each breast. If you are double-pumping you can double pump for 10 minutes. Have a glass of water then double or single pump while massaging your breast for 5 minutes.

If milk is not yet flowing using the pump we recommend hand expressing for 5 minutes each side after pumping.

Expressing after feeds to increase breastmilk volume – express for 5-10 minutes on each breast.

Handy Hints

- If you express both breasts at the same time – double pump you can save time.
- Alternatively Using breast compression while you are single pumping can increase the volume of milk expressed.
- Studies show that women who double-pump with compression plus hand express can achieve up to twice the volume expressed as women who single pump their breasts.

Hiring an Electric Breast pump

- Electric breast pumps can be hired from many pharmacies or the Australian Breastfeeding Association. Ask your midwife for a list of suppliers.

