

Your important health information

Expressing breast milk for your baby in the nursery

- Your breast milk is the best food for your baby.
- Your breast milk helps your baby to grow and to fight infection.
- Your first breast milk is called colostrum, volumes are small but it is very important and protective for your baby.
- If your baby is temporarily unable to breastfeed, begin expressing as soon as possible after your baby is born.
- Expressing frequently after birth builds a good milk supply and your milk volumes will increase as you continue to express.
- Any amount of milk you produce will benefit your baby.
- A baby born full term typically drinks 500-1000ml of milk every day by 2- 4 weeks.

There are two ways to stimulate milk supply and express milk: hand expressing and using an electric breast pump.

Beginning to express

Gentle breast massage and warmth (a warm pack or shower) before expressing may help your milk begin to flow.

Expressing beside your baby's cot or looking at a photograph of your baby and having an item of baby's clothing may also help your milk to flow.

Aim to express at least 8 times in 24 hours, including 1-2 times overnight

How do I hand express?



1. Before expressing, wash your hands
2. Gently massage breasts
3. Place your thumb and fingers opposite each other around the edge of your areola

4. Press your thumb and forefinger back towards your chest and compress your fingers and thumb gently together with a slight forward movement.
5. Avoid squeezing your nipple or sliding your fingers on the skin. This should not be painful.
6. Relax your fingers and thumb to lessen the squeeze but continue to keep your fingers/thumb touching your breast, continue to squeeze and relax, gradually moving your fingers around your areola to express your milk as much milk as possible
7. Express until milk flow slows to a few drops, then change to the other breast.
8. If your hand tires you can swap to the other hand or have a rest. Switch breasts two to three times for 10 or more minutes.
9. Your colostrum can be collected in a clean medicine cup or sterile syringe.
10. Colostrum amounts may be very small but will increase if you keep expressing frequently.

For more information on hand expressing you can watch these videos:



Hand expressing, Australian Breastfeeding Association

<https://www.breastfeeding.asn.au/resources/hand-expressing>



Expressing the first milk, Global Health Media

<https://globalhealthmedia.org/videos/expressing-the-first-milk/>

How do I use an electric breast pump?

Hospital grade electric breast pumps are recommended for mothers of premature or sick babies, and are available to use on the hospital wards and in the nursery.

The pump should always be cleaned before and after use. Antibacterial wipes are provided to clean the pump.

Using the pump:

- Remove tight clothing and let your breast “dangle” in a natural position.
- Gently hand express some milk to start the flow (may only be drops in the early days)
- Place the pump flange centrally over your nipple, holding it gently in place and creating a seal without pressing deeply into your breast.
- If you have pain when expressing, the pump pressure may be too strong, or the breast pump flange may be too big or too small so please talk to your nurse, midwife or lactation consultant.
- Turn the pump ON by pressing the power button.
- The pump has 2 stages, first a 2 minute “stimulation” phase and then an “expressing” phase.
- When milk flow slows you can express your other breast; express each breast twice. Expressing takes about 20-30mins total when single pumping and 15-20mins total when double pumping.

Tips for expressing with an electric breast pump

- You can also get pump kits to express on both breasts at the same time. This is called double pumping. It is quicker and helps to build up and maintain your milk supply.
- If double pumping, once milk slows, gently massage both breasts then reapply flanges and continue expressing. Finish expressing with some hand expressing to ensure breast softening.
- Using your hands whilst expressing with a pump, called 'hands on pumping' can help you to express additional milk. Gentle massage whilst using the pump can increase the amount of milk flowing into the pump.
- It may be helpful to keep an expressing diary to track your expressed milk volumes.
- **Disposable 24-hour pump kits are unsafe to use after 24 hours, please replace your kit with another disposable kit or use a long-term pump kit.**

For more information on how to increase the amount you express by combining expressing with your hands and an electric breast pump, you can watch this video.



Electric pump and hands-on pumping, First Droplets

<https://vimeo.com/291806551>

Cleaning your breast pump kit

After each pump use:

- Use a clean sink or bowl. Rinse all breast pump parts which are in contact with your breast milk in cold water, wash breast pump pieces in hot soapy water.
- Rinse all pump pieces with hot clear water. Wipe over tubing.
- Air dry on a clean surface. Store in a clean, dry container.

Disinfect your expressing equipment **once a day** whilst your baby is in the nursery:

- Boil all breast pump parts for five minutes in a pot of boiling water. Allow to cool before removing with clean tongs, OR
- Microwave kits/or microwave bags. Follow manufacturer's instructions, OR
- Steam units: clean and dry the unit after use. Follow manufacturer's instructions.

Electric breast pump hire

- Both Mercy Hospital for Women and Werribee Mercy Hospital have breast pump hire options if your baby is in the neonatal nursery – ask your midwife, nurse or a Lactation Consultant for more information.

- Please bring your expressing kit with you when visiting your baby in the nursery so you can continue expressing with the hospital electric breast pump.

Storage and transportation of expressed breast milk

- Transfer your freshly expressed breast milk into breast milk containers with yellow fitted lids provided by your nurse. Please ask your nurse for more breast milk containers and labels as you need.
- Label your breast milk with an expressed breast milk sticker: your baby's name and UR sticker, date, and time of expression. If you have more than one baby, label the container with each baby's name stickers.
- Refrigerate your breast milk as soon as you can after each expression.
- Transport your milk in a clean small esky / food carrier with an ice pack. Give the milk to your baby's nurse as soon as you arrive to the hospital.
- Freeze your milk within 48 hours if it is not fed to your baby.

Further Information

If you have any questions regarding this information, please contact:

Mercy Hospital for Women

Breastfeeding Support Service

Phone: 8458 4677

Werribee Mercy Hospital

Breastfeeding Support Service

Phone: 8754 3407

Australian Breastfeeding Association Helpline

Phone: 1800 686 268 (24/7 – free)

Maternal & Child Health Line

Phone: 132 229 (24/7 – free)

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This document provides general information only and is not intended to replace advice about your health from a qualified practitioner. If you are concerned about your health, you should seek advice from a qualified practitioner.