



## Your important health information

# Expressing breastmilk

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### You may need to express if:

- your baby cannot feed at the breast
- you are apart from your baby
- your baby needs extra breastmilk
- your breasts are very full
- you have sore nipples
- your breastmilk supply is low.

### Before you start to express:

- your midwife will teach you how
- wash your hands before expressing
- try to relax and sit comfortably. Take some mild pain relief if needed
- cuddle your baby or give some kangaroo care as this can help the milk flow
- gently massage and put some warmth on your breasts for a short time
- if you are not with your baby:
  - have a photo by you
  - sniff/smell something your baby has worn
  - think of your baby.

### When do I express?

If your baby is not with you or your baby is not attaching:

- start as soon as you can after your baby is born
- 8 or more times in 24 hours (day and night)
  - this helps to keep your milk supply and your breasts from becoming too full.

**more milk out = more milk made**

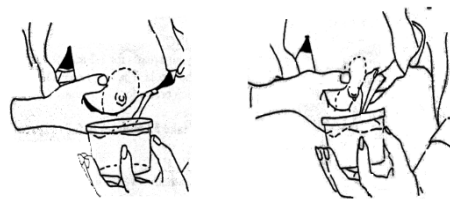
### How much milk do I express?

Your breasts will make small amounts of colostrum (the first milk) for the first two to three days, which may range from a few drops to a few millilitres (mls).

- As this first milk changes to more mature milk, you will be able to express larger amounts.
- Express each breast until it is well drained or feels softer.
- Change between breasts two to three times during each expression when the flow slows
  - this may take around 30 minutes in total.
- If you are expressing more than your baby needs, the milk can be frozen for when your baby starts to take more.

## Hand expressing

- Put your thumb and forefinger opposite each other, just outside the areola (darker area around nipple).
- Press backward toward your ribs.
- Gently squeeze your fingers together behind the areola.
- Repeat these two actions again and again.
- Move your fingers around areola.
- Continue for a few minutes then go to the other breast.
- Swap back and forth between breasts.
- You can catch your milk on a clean teaspoon or in a small cup.



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## Breast pump expressing

A hospital grade electric breast pump is best for mothers of premature babies or if you are expressing for most feeds

### Expressing with a single pump

- Place the breast pump flange on your breast with your nipple in the middle.
- Start with the suction/vacuum on low and the speed/cycles on fast.
- Once the milk begins to flow – this may take a few minutes:
  - slow the speed/cycles to around medium
  - slowly change the suction/vacuum to a stronger level to where it feels comfortable for you.
- Express the first breast until milk flow slows
  - switch to the second breast
  - do this again for each breast two to three times
  - express for 20-30 minutes in total.

### Expressing with a double pump

- Using a double pumping kit is quicker and helps to keep your breast milk supply.
- Start by using the double kit with the settings as above.
- Express both breasts until milk flow slows.
- Stop expressing and massage both breasts gently.
- Start expressing again using either the double pump kit or express one breast at a time until you feel the breasts are well drained.
- Double pumping should take about 20 – 25 minutes in total.

### **If expressing is hurting:**

- the pump settings may be too strong or too fast
- the breast pump flange may not be the right size for you
- check with a midwife or lactation consultant.

### **Points to remember when expressing**

- Hand express for the first few days – this is the best way to get your colostrum:
  - you can also use an electric breast pump as extra stimulation at this stage - keep suction/vacuum gentle and sessions short
  - using both hand and pump expressing soon after birth seems to give more milk.
- Expressing should not hurt – please tell your midwife if it is hurting.
- Gentle breast pressure or massage during expressing will help with the milk flow.

### **Cleaning your breast pump**

You need to clean very well all items used to feed your baby or express.

After each use:

- do not wash tubing or get water in it
- take apart breast pump parts and rinse in cold water
- wash well in hot soapy water – use a bottle brush on hard plastic parts
- rinse well in hot water
- leave to dry then store in a clean, covered container ready to use.

### **Storing and caring for your breastmilk**

See the Mercy Health Breastfeeding Guide pages on *Expressing and storing breastmilk*.

#### **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 1800 686 268

App mum2mum

[www.breastfeeding.asn.au](http://www.breastfeeding.asn.au)

Maternal & Child Health Line  
Phone 13 22 29

Private Lactation Consultant  
[www.lcanz.org](http://www.lcanz.org)

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