

Your important health information

Expressing breastmilk in neonatal nurseries

- Your breastmilk is the best food for your baby.
- Your breastmilk helps your baby to grow and to fight infection.
- Your first breastmilk 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 milk you produce will benefit your baby, aim for 500-750ml each 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

Hand expressing



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. 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:



Expressing the first milk, Global Health Media

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



Hand expressing, Australian Breastfeeding Association

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



Hand expression, Unicef UK Baby Friendly Initiative

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K0zVCwdJZw0&t=18s>

Using an electric breast pump

Medela Symphony Plus electric pumps are hospital grade and are available to use in the hospital wards and in the nursery.

Hospital grade electric breast pumps are recommended for mothers of premature or sick babies.

The Symphony 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 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.

The Symphony pump has two settings: initiate and maintain.

Days 1-5:

- Choose the INITIATE program: press the “on” button (left), read the display and then press the initiate button (right)
- The INITIATE program runs for 15 minutes and is used to stimulate your breasts to start making more milk. Each breast needs to be expressed with the INITIATE program

After day 5, or earlier if you are expressing 20mls or more:

- Choose the MAINTAIN program by only pressing the “on” button (left).
- This program is used to increase and then maintain your milk supply.
- The MAINTAIN program 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 the disposable kit or consider buying a permanent kit.**

For more information on expressing with 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

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.

After each pump use:

- Use a clean sink or bowl. Rinse all breast pump parts which are in contact with your breastmilk 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.

Electric breast pump hire

- If your baby will be staying in the nursery for more than one week you can hire a hospital grade pump from the reception desk on level 2.
- You can also hire an electric breast pump hire in the community.
 - Local pharmacy: Grace pharmacy -110 Burgundy St Heidelberg, phone 9458 111
 - My Breast Pump www.mybreastpump.com.au
 - Medela: www.medela.com.au/breastfeeding/locationfinder
 - Australian Breastfeeding Association: www.breastfeeding.asn.au
 - Hire For Baby: www.hireforbaby.com
 - Express@home: www.expressathome.com.au
- You will need your own reusable (permanent) breast pump kit to use with your hired electric breast pump, you can buy one when you arrange pump hire.
- Before you are discharged from the hospital you could arrange hire of a breast pump and purchase of a breast pump kit.
- 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 breastmilk

- Transfer your freshly expressed breastmilk into breastmilk containers with yellow fitted lids provided by your nurse. Please ask your nurse for more breastmilk containers and labels as you need.
- Label your breastmilk with an expressed breastmilk 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 breastmilk 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:

MHW Lactation Department
Phone: 03 8458 4677

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.