

Your important health information

Expressing breastmilk in neonatal nurseries

Your breastmilk is best for your baby.

Your breastmilk helps your baby to grow and to fight infection.

Beginning to express

If your baby is unable to breastfeed, begin expressing as soon as possible after your baby is born. It is important to express very often, to copy your baby's feeding pattern. This will tell your body to make more milk.

- Breastfed babies usually feed every 2-3 hours during the day including at least once overnight. **Express 8 or more times a day.**
- Your first milk is called colostrum. The amount is very small, but important for your baby. Your milk will change and will increase as you continue to express.

Starting your "Let Down Reflex."

- GENTLE massage and warmth (warm packs/shower) to each breast may help your milk to begin to flow. If your baby is in nurseries, expressing at your baby's bedside or a photograph of your baby or smell of baby clothing may assist you. Try to relax. Keep a water bottle to drink if you become thirsty.

Electric breast pumps

- A hospital grade electric breast pump is recommended for mothers of premature or sick babies and can be started within an hour after baby's birth.
- Double pumping is quicker and helps to build up and keep your milk supply.

In the postnatal wards and in nurseries

- While you are in the postnatal ward, your nurse will give you a disposable expressing breast pump kit for your own use. This can be used 8 times or for 24 hours only.
- After this time, you will need to dispose of it, and buy your own permanent reusable breast pump kit.
- When visiting your baby in nurseries, Medela Symphony Plus electric breast pumps are available for expressing. Please bring your breast pump kit with you.

Electric breast pump hire

- If your baby is admitted to MHW nurseries for more than one week, hire of the Medela Lactina (blue) is available at the nurseries ward clerk desk.
- The Medela Symphony electric breast pump (yellow) is available to hire from chemists (see Medela website) and from the Australian Breastfeeding Association.
- You will need to purchase your own breast pump kit, which works with both pumps. This is available from nurseries ward clerk desk.
- **Before you are discharged from the hospital-please hire your hospital grade electric breast pump and purchase your breast pump kit for home use.**
- Please bring your expressing kit with you when visiting your baby.

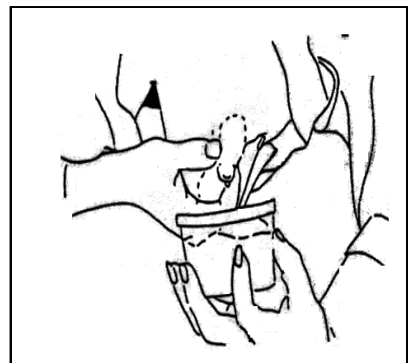
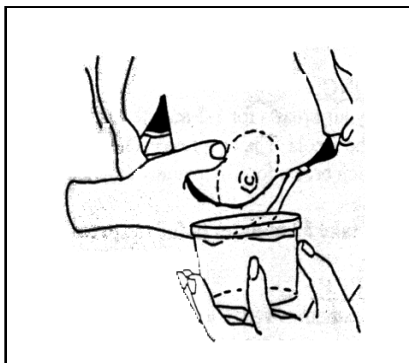
How to express

Before expressing, wash your hands with soap and water/hand wash. Your breast pump kit and bench areas must also be clean.

Expressing by hand

- Put your thumb and finger opposite each other on either side of your areola.
- Press your thumb and forefinger back into your breast then **gently** press together with a slight forward action. Avoid squeezing nipple. **This should not be painful.**
- Gradually, move your fingers around your areola to collect milk.
- Express until milk flow slows to a few drops. Change to your other breast. If your hand tires, swap to the other hand or have a rest. Repeat two to three times during expressing.
- Your colostrum can be collected in a sterile syringe.
- Colostrum amounts are very small. Keep expressing for your baby. This will help your milk to 'come in'.

Single electric pump expression



- **Wipe over breast pumps before and after use with disinfectant wipes.**
- Keep your breast in usual position. Place breast pump flange over your nipple.
- Hold the flange in place, without pressing deeply into your breast.
- **Gentle breast massage 'hands on pumping' will assist your milk to flow and increase the fat content of your breast milk. This helps your baby to grow.**

Medela Symphony Plus

- **Day 1- 5** Turn on the pump and select the program and suction strength.
- Start with the INITIATE program, which you can select. (See instructions on front of pump.) This program is set for 15 minutes for each breast. This program copies your baby's early sucking patterns.
- **After day 5 /** or if you are able to express 20 mls three times in a row, use the MAINTAIN program. Express your first breast until milk flow begins to slow - approximately 5-7 minutes, then change to your second breast. Repeat for each breast two to three times. Express for 20-30 minutes in total. This will encourage more milk flow.

Lactina

- Select the suction strength setting to minimum then turn on the pump.
- Increase pump strength and speed to preferred **comfort** level.
- Express your first breast until milk flow begins to slow – approximately 5-7 minutes then change to your second breast. Repeat for each breast two to three times. Express for 20-30 minutes in total.

Hand expressing after electric breast pumping may help to clear your breasts and make more milk.

Double electric breast pump expression

Double pumping is quicker and helps to build up and keep your milk supply.

- Begin expressing as for single pump use.
- Place the second flange centrally over your nipple.
- Express both breasts until your milk flow slows, approximately 5-7 minutes. Gently massage both breasts.
- Reapply flanges and continue to express. Repeat.
- Express for 15-20 minutes or until your breasts feel comfortable.
- Finish expressing by single pump or hand express to ensure breast softening.

Aim: to express between 500-750mls of milk each day by two to three weeks.

If you have pain when expressing

The pump pressure may be too strong or the breast pump flange may be too small. Please review with your midwife or lactation consultant.

Storage and transportation of expressed breastmilk

- **Storage:** your nurse will give you new breastmilk containers with yellow fitted lids. Transfer your freshly expressed breastmilk into the container to keep your breast milk fresh with less risk of infection.
Please ask your nurse for more breastmilk containers, as you need.
- While your baby is in nurseries, breastmilk plastic bags are only to be used if you do not have breast milk containers. (Available from chemists). They can be used when your baby is well at home.
Please do not put your breastmilk in Glad sandwich bags for breast milk storage.
- **Label** your breastmilk with an expressed breastmilk sticker, your baby's name and UR sticker. Please include date and time of expression. If you have more than one baby, please label the container with each baby's name stickers.
- **Refrigerate** your breastmilk after each expression. Transport your milk in a 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.

Cleaning your breast pump

Wipe over breast pumps before and after use with disinfectant wipes.

After each 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 to avoid moisture in tubing
- dry with paper towel/air dry. Store in a clean dry container.

If your baby is unwell or admitted to nurseries, please disinfect your expressing equipment each day.

- 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.
- Steam units: clean and dry the unit after use. Follow manufacturer's instructions.
- Chemical disinfection (Milton solution) is no longer used.

Preventing mastitis

Breastfeeding or expressing very often will help to soften your breasts and prevent blocked ducts, which can cause mastitis.

If you feel lumpy areas in your breast which are not softening:

- try to express more often
- apply warmth before expressing
- gently massage lumpy areas of your breast
- cold packs after expressing may reduce breast swelling
- avoid tight bras and clothing.

If areas of your breast are reddened, tender, swollen or you feel unwell, please seek medical assistance. Your nurse or lactation consultant will also help you.

Frequent expressing of your breasts 8 or more times a day will help to make more milk and to prevent blocked ducts and mastitis.

MORE MILK OUT = MORE MILK MADE

Resources available online

- Australian Breastfeeding Association website – expressing breast milk
- Stanford University/Jane Morton YouTube – expressing breast milk
- Raising Children website
- Medela website – breast pump assembly and use

Further Information

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

Lactation Department MHW
Phone: 03 8458 4677

Emergency Department MHW
Phone: 03 8458 4000

Australian Breastfeeding Association Helpline
Phone: 1800 686 268

Maternal & Child Health Line
Phone: 132 229

Acknowledgements

Produced by: Lactation Department MHW

Date produced: October 2017

Date of last review: April 2020

Date for review: April 2022

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.