



Expressing your breastmilk

Breastmilk is the healthiest food for babies, and provides life-long protection from illness. However, there may be times when a baby is unable to feed directly from the breast. Breastmilk can be made available by expressing milk from your breast for your baby.

Reasons to express breastmilk:

- to establish, increase or maintain milk supply
- to relieve uncomfortable breast fullness
- to provide breastmilk to a baby who is unable to latch or cannot feed well at the breast
- to provide breastmilk to a baby when a mother chooses not to feed her baby at the breast
- to have breastmilk available when separated from baby

Ways to express breastmilk:

- by hand or manual expression
- by breast pump

Manual milk expression:

Manual expression is removing breastmilk by hand. It is a good skill for all breastfeeding mothers to learn. It does not require equipment beyond a container in which to collect the milk.

Manual expression can be used to:

- remove milk from a very full and uncomfortable breast
- soften the areola so baby can latch easier
- collect milk
- encourage let-down

You've got what it takes!

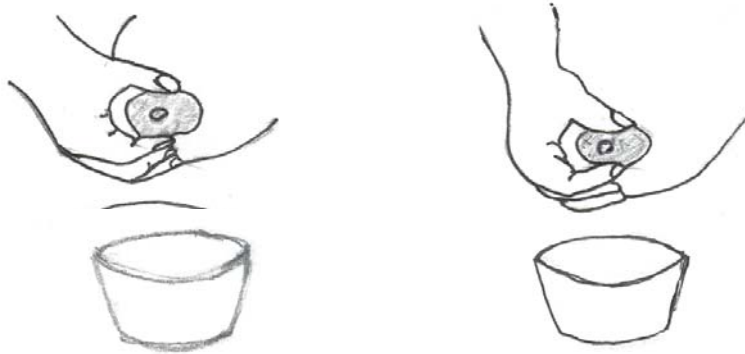
For more information call **Health Connection** at 1-800-361-5653



How to express breastmilk by hand



1. Wash hands with soap and water
2. Massage breasts with a warm wet towel or apply heat to encourage milk flow*
3. Use a clean glass or plastic container to collect milk
4. Position thumb and first two fingers about 1 to 1½ inches behind the nipple, directly across from each other
5. Push back toward the chest wall
6. Without changing placement, roll thumb and fingers together to express milk



- Repeat steps 4-6
- Rotate thumb and finger position around nipple
- Switch breasts when milk flow slows down
- Move back and forth between breasts
- Avoid pulling on the nipple, squeezing, or sliding hands over the breast. These actions can cause pain and skin damage.

* *Do not apply heat to breasts that are engorged. Please refer to the “Engorgement” fact sheet for information regarding care of engorged breasts*

Massage - Stroke - Shake

To get milk to flow better or to increase your milk supply, use these 3 steps before pumping:



Massage



Stroke



Shake

Using a breast pump:

How to pump:

- Centre flange on the nipple
- Turn the pump on if using an electric pump
- Start with pump on the lowest suction setting,
- Increase suction gradually to encourage milk to flow but do not increase suction to point of discomfort
- Think about your baby and take some deep breaths



If you are just starting to pump

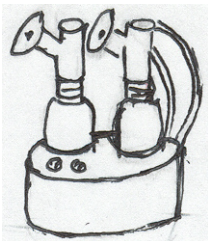
- There may only be drops for the first few days
- Pump for about 10 minutes each time even if you are only getting drops

When your supply increases:

- Each pumping session will begin with drips and then progress to the breastmilk spraying from the nipple - called a “let down”
- Pump for two minutes after spraying stops to see if another letdown will occur
- If spraying does not start again - stop pumping
- Repeat on second breast if not using a double breast pump
- Do not go longer than 5 hours between pumping sessions, or breastfeedings, as this may decrease your milk supply

Solving problems:

- **If your nipple is too large** to fit the flange comfortably, or you are having difficulty expressing milk, you may need a different size flange, or an insert, to make pumping comfortable and effective
- **If pumping is painful:** Reduce suction until comfortable. Be aware that a poor quality breast pump may hurt or even damage your nipples and may not remove milk well. If you are having discomfort, or your pump is not removing milk effectively, contact the manufacturer or call *Health Connection* at 1-800-361-5653 to book an appointment at one of the *York Region Health Services Breastfeeding Clinics*
- **If you are not getting good suction with your pump:** take the pump apart and reassemble according to the manufacturer’s instructions. If it is still not functioning well, contact the manufacturer



Cleaning containers and pump parts

- Check the pump manufacturer’s instructions. All parts which come in contact with breastmilk should be sterilized before the first use. These parts should then be washed with hot soapy water, rinsed, and left to dry after each use

Tips for expressing breastmilk

When newborns are unable to breastfeed

Sometimes babies are unable to breastfeed, due to illness or separation, and can be fed breastmilk another way

- Begin expressing as soon as possible after the birth
- Use a high-quality electric double pump
- Pump 6- 8 times in each 24 hours
- Attempt to latch the baby to the breast as soon as possible

When separated occasionally from baby

- In general, pump once for every 4 hours you are separated from your baby

To increase breastmilk supply:

- Breastfeeding more often is the best way to increase your milk supply if your baby is sucking well
- If your baby is not sucking well, or will not feed frequently, pump after each feed for ten minutes, or until no drops of milk are expressed for two minutes, whichever happens first
- Consult a breastfeeding expert for other suggestions to increase your supply. You can call *Health Connection* at 1-800-361-5653 to book an appointment at one of the *York Region Health Services Breastfeeding Clinics*

To build a stock of breastmilk in the freezer:

Pump:

- When you feel fullest – often this happens in the morning
- If your baby only takes one breast at a feeding - pump the other breast
- One hour after breastfeeding your baby

Long-term pumping:

If your baby is not breastfeeding you can provide breastmilk to your baby for months

- Give more fresh breastmilk instead of frozen breastmilk, so that your baby receives the most nutrients
- Pump 6-8 times per 24 hours - you may be able pump less times in a day when you have a good supply of breastmilk
- If your breastmilk supply drops – sometimes called a “pump slump” – increase number of times you pump each day