

EXPRESSING YOUR BREAST MILK



There are many reasons parents want to express milk. You may be returning to work or study. You may need to be separated from your baby for a while. Your baby may have been born premature or be unable to breastfeed for some other reason. You may need to increase or protect your milk supply.

Whatever your reasons, this leaflet has been written to help you to learn to express safely and effectively.

A NOTE FOR YOU

Unless there is a medical need, it helps to wait until after breastfeeding is established (usually around 4-6 weeks) before you get started with a pump. Having a new baby can be overwhelming and breastfeeding can be a learning curve for you both. Sometimes people may suggest you express your milk to “give you a break” but pumping milk with all it entails can sometimes be less helpful than is thought. An alternative is asking for help with other things instead while you rest; bathing, playing, settling, changing, baby wearing, cooking, cleaning...the list is endless!



EQUIPMENT

For hand expression you need a wide mouthed, sterilised bowl to collect milk and clean hands! Your midwife can show you how to hand express and there is a great video on the Unicef website:

Breast pumps are big business and there is a lot of choice out there. Think about your needs carefully before buying anything. Someone who needs to exclusively express milk may find a powerful, double, electric, pump helpful but someone who only wants to express one bottle now and then may be fine with a simple manual pump, one piece silicon pump or even just hand expression!

HOW IT WORKS

A pump isn't usually as effective as your baby at taking milk from the breast and some people find it difficult to pump much at all. This is not a reflection of your milk supply! Milk comes out of the breast when oxytocin- the hormone of love- is released into your brain, not just when suction is applied.

Doing a bit of prep work can help. Simply attempting to haul milk out of an unprepared breast is often very hard! If you still struggle to pump much with an electric or manual pump, you may have more success with hand expression.

PUMPING TO INCREASE SUPPLY

One of the basic principles of breastfeeding is that the more milk you ask for, the more is produced. Sometimes people are advised to give extra stimulation to the breasts with a pump in order to increase milk supply. You may see only a few drops of milk but remember what is most important is the message is sent to your breasts to make more milk, not the amount collected.

HOW TO EXPRESS

Beforehand:

- Wash your hands.
- Use heat- warm flannels, heat bag, even warm hands!
- Skin contact- gently massaging the breasts in a circular motion or downward stroking movements towards the nipple. Tweaking and rolling of the nipple can be helpful.

During:

- Think about your baby, look at, stroke and caress them.
- If separated from your baby, smell some of their clothing, have a photo on your phone or better still, a short video clip of them that you love.
- Don't focus on what is going into the pump! Do something else while pumping. Sometimes it helps to cover up the pump bottle completely with a sock while you pump.

COLLECTING RATHER THAN EXPRESSING

Milk that leaks from the other side while feeding can be caught in breast shells or collecting cups (empty straight after feeding to keep the milk fresh!). These small amounts can be cooled, combined and stored! At the end of the day you could have an ounce or two without having to do much work at all!

One piece silicon pumps are another way of collecting milk. They suction on to the breast and can be used passively or actively (by squeezing the bulb). Parents often use them on the opposite side when feeding.

WHEN TO PUMP

- You may wish to pump off a small amount after each feed, combining that into one bottle to be used or stored at the end of the day
- Pumping on one breast whilst feeding on the other makes clever use of the let-down reflex if you find you struggle to pump milk.
- Some parents choose to have their partner do one whole feed while they use that time to express the next one.
- Pumping during the early hours of the day or during the night can be more productive as milk making hormone levels are higher.
- Do remember; **extra stimulation to the breasts will mean you produce more milk**. If you naturally produce a lot of milk, small collections throughout the day may help you to manage your milk supply more easily.

MILK STORAGE

- Freezer -18C+: 6 months
- Fridge 4C or under: 5 days
- Ice compartment of a fridge freezer: 2 weeks
- Room temperature: 6 hours
- Frozen, then thawed: 24 hours
- It can be helpful to save milk in small amounts (i.e. 2oz) to reduce wastage!



FURTHER HELP

You may find this information helpful alongside our leaflet "Bottle Feeding The Breastfed Baby"

www.CharnwoodBRAS.co.uk

Contact us on 07583041054

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