

# Expressing and Storing of Breast Milk

## Some reasons to express Breast Milk

- Premature or sick baby that is not able to breastfeed.
- Once your milk supply increases (milk coming in) the supply is often very large and may exceed the baby's requirement.  
The breast may be firm which may make it difficult for your baby to latch on to breast. Expressing small amounts will soften the breast and makes it easier for the baby to latch on.
- If breasts are engorged expressing to relieve pressure may be necessary.
- Low milk production. Frequent and thorough removal of milk from the breasts is important for increasing milk production.
- If your baby is not feeding effectively or is too sleepy at the breast, expressing will maintain your milk supply.
- Expressing to store breast milk when going back to work or an outing.
- Cracked bleeding nipples. Expressing for some feeds will assist with healing of the nipple.

## The let down reflex

The let down reflex is a natural process that occurs with breastfeeding and it is important in assuring that your baby gets all the milk needed.

When you express your milk or even sometimes when you are just thinking of your baby, your body release a hormone called oxytocin, which pushes the milk down the ducts just behind the nipple. This is called the let down reflex.

This reflex occurs several times during the expressing process.

Many mothers notice one or more of the following signs of let-down:

- Tingling feeling in the breasts.
- A sudden feel of fullness
- An increase in skin temperature.
- A feeling of well-being and relaxation.
- Leaking or spurting of milk from the breasts.
- Intense thirst.
- Uterine contraction accompanied by an increase in vaginal blood loss in the immediate post natal period.
- When breastfeeding, a change in the baby's suckling pattern.

The let down reflex works repeatedly during expressing, after a slight pause in flow of milk, there will be another increase.

Relaxation techniques and being comfortable when expressing will assist with the let-down.

Stress, anxiety, pain, fear can inhibit the let down.

It may help to have your baby next to you. If that is not possible have a photo of your baby near you or even thinking of your baby. This will help with the let down reflex.

For Further Information Contact the Midwifery Unit on (03) 57220 225

Some mothers find that by applying a moist warm cloth on the breasts before beginning to express will assist with the let down, or massaging the breasts gently towards the nipple

### **There are 3 ways to express milk**

- Hand expressing
- Hand held breast pump
- Electric breast pump

### **How to hand express**

- Wash hands with warm soapy water before expressing.
- Use a clean disinfected, wide mouth deep bowl to catch the milk in.
- Hand expressing takes a little time to learn, however some women find it easy.
- Massage breast towards the nipple as this will help to initiate the let down reflex.
- Try to relax. The let down reflex is delayed by anxiety, although it will eventually occur.
- The thumb and finger are placed diagonally opposite on the edge of the areola.
- Gently press towards the centre of the breast, squeezing the finger and thumb together.
- The fingers should rotate around the areola to ensure all areas of the breasts are expressed.
- Repeat with rhythmic, rolling movements, the fingers should not slide over or pinch the skin.
- To reduce muscle fatigue, change hands regularly.
- Gradually the milk flow lessens to a trickle and finally only a few drops are obtained, and then commence expressing other breast.

### **Manual Breast Pump**

Hand breast pumps are available to buy at most pharmacy or various stores. The designs are different some more effective than others

A hand pump must be:

- Effective
  - Comfortable
  - Easy to use
  - Safe to use (it should not damage the nipples or cause muscle strain)
  - Economical
- 
- Clean and sterilize the breast pump before use.
  - Some mothers find it helpful to stimulate the letdown reflex by massaging the breast or hand expressing until letdown occurs, then use the pump
  - Place the flat rim of the breast cup on the breast, centring the nipple.
  - Gently work the pump with a smooth action, pulling the piston and releasing the suction rhythmically. (Medela Lactaset).  
Some breast pumps eg Medela Harmony or the Avent are single hand breast pumps. Follow the instructions.
  - Change to the other breast and repeat the process. Continue to express until the required amount is obtained.
  - Place the expressed breast milk in a clean sterile container or freezer bags especially for storing breast milk, and refrigerate as per guidelines.

**For Further Information Contact the Midwifery Unit on (03) 57220 225**



## Electric Breast Pump

Some Pharmacies and Australian Breastfeeding Associations have electric breast pumps for hire.

Electric breast pumps are also available to for purchase at some pharmacies and various other stores.

- You will need to purchase a kit suitable for the particular breast pump that you are going to use.
- Follow the instructions of that particular breast pump.
- Wash and sterilize the breast pump kit before use as per instructions.
- Single and double pump sets are available.
- Place the flat rim of the breast cup on the breast centring the nipple.
- Turn the pump on with the suction on low; wait until the let down has occurred before increasing the pressure.
- Continue to express until breast is soft or the required amount is obtained.
- Place breast milk in a clean plastic container and refrigerate as per guidelines.

Special freezer bags for storing breast milk are available in most Pharmacies and some other stores.

## Hygiene is important

Unwashed hands and unclean pumps or bottle can contaminate breast milk.

- Wash hand thoroughly before expressing.
- Make sure all equipment is clean
- If you are using your own expressing equipment and are not sharing it with anyone else, there is no need to sterilize after each use. Washing thoroughly in hot soapy water , rinsing it in hot water and storing in a clean covered container are adequate

## Where to get help

Lactation Clinic - Northeast Health Wangaratta (03) 5722 0487

Midwifery Unit – Northeast Health Wangaratta (03) 5722 0225  
(03) 5722 0301

Australian Breastfeeding Association  
24 hour phone service 1800 134 883

Maternal and Child Health Nurse in your area

Maternal Child Health Nurse  
24 Hour Help Line 13 22 29

Midwives at your local Hospital

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## Storage of Breast Milk for Infant Use

<b>Breast Milk</b>	<b>Room Temperature</b>	<b>Refrigerator</b>	<b>Freezer</b>
<b>Freshly expressed into closed container.</b>	6-8 hours (26 deg C or lower)  If refrigeration is available store in there.	3-5 days (4°C or lower.)  Store in back of refrigerator where it is coldest.	2 weeks in freezer compartment inside a refrigerator.  3 months in freezer section of refrigerator (with separate door)  6-12 months in deep freeze (18°C or lower.)
<b>Previously frozen, thawed in refrigerator but not warmed</b>	4 hours or less (ie next feeding)	Store in refrigerator 24 hours	<b><i>Do not refreeze</i></b>
<b>Thawed outside refrigerator in warm water</b>	For completion of feeding	Hold for 4 hours or until next feeding	<b><i>Do not refreeze</i></b>
<b>Infant has begun feeding</b>	Only for completion of feeding, then discard	<b><i>Discard</i></b>	<b><i>Discard</i></b>

*From the National Health and Medical Research Council. Infant Guidelines for Health Workers.*

### **DO NOT HEAT BREASTMILK IN THE MICROWAVE**

**To defrost frozen milk, either put it in the refrigerator overnight, or place it under warm running water (not hot)**

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