

How to express your milk by hand



Hand expression is a helpful skill to learn when you have a new baby, regardless of how you feed them. There are a number of reasons you might find it helpful.

WHEN TO HAND EXPRESS YOUR MILK

During low-risk pregnancies, from 36 weeks on

- Discuss with your health care provider if this is a good choice for you
- Practice expressing your milk before your baby arrives
- Collect colostrum in case your baby needs extra in the early days after birth

While breastfeeding your baby

- Interest your baby in latching
- Soften very full breasts, to help your baby latch well, or to relieve your discomfort
- Collect colostrum or milk, to feed to your baby if they can't yet feed at the breast, or if you are apart
- Increase or keep up your milk supply (if you have concerns about your supply, speak with your health care provider)
- After using a breast pump, use hand expression to collect more milk
- Rub a few drops of milk on your nipples to keep them healthy

While feeding infant formula (human milk substitutes)

- Relieve pressure when your breasts feel full

HOW TO EXPRESS YOUR MILK BY HAND

Prepare

- Hand expressing takes practice and it is normal to get very little milk at first. In time, you can learn to do this almost any where.
- To collect colostrum or milk, use a spoon, syringe, cup, or other clean container.
- Wash your hands with soap and warm water.
- To encourage your milk to flow (“let down”) try applying a warm cloth to your breast, snuggling skin-to-skin with your baby, massaging your breast, or rolling your nipple gently between your thumb and finger.
- Gently massage your breast in a circular motion, working from your chest towards your nipple.

Step 1: Press

- Put your hand in a wide “C” shape on your breast behind your areola.
- Gently press your thumb and fingers back towards your chest.

Step 2: Squeeze gently

- Gently squeeze your thumb and fingers towards each other.
- Keeping your hold on your breast, move your fingers towards the nipple.
- Avoid sliding your fingers down your breast, and avoid pinching or pulling your nipple.

Step 3: Release

- Keep your fingers on your skin.
- Release the squeeze, while keeping your “C” shape.

Step 4: Repeat

- Repeat the “press, gentle squeeze, release” motions.
- Change the placement of your fingers so that you express milk from different parts of your breast.
- It may take a few repetitions before you see milk coming out of your nipple.
- It should feel comfortable and without pain; adjust, as needed.



STEP 1:
Press back towards chest



STEP 2:
Squeeze gently

Learn more



[A Video on Hand
Expressing Breastmilk
HealthLink BC](#)



[More Milk
Sooner](#)