



northern health
the northern way of caring

How to Use an Electric Breast Pump

When is an electric breast pump needed?

In the first few days after your baby is born, you will have small amounts of colostrum (the early milk) that is the perfect food for your baby. It is recommended to use hand expression, to remove breast milk, for the first 24 hours after delivery if breastfeeding is not an option. Pumping with an electric breast pump may be recommended after that time if:

- Your baby is unable to breastfeed (ill or in a neonatal intensive care unit).
- You are separated from your baby for other reasons.
- You are having breastfeeding difficulties (e.g., low milk supply).

Pumping instructions

- Wash your hands well before you begin.
- Massage your breasts gently.
- Getting the right fit:
 - Make sure you have the size of pump flange that fits you best. Your nipples should not be rubbing against the flange. This can cause nipple pain, and damage, and you may get less milk.
 - If your nipples are bigger than a nickel or smaller than a pencil eraser at rest, then you likely need a bigger/smaller flange size than the standard. (These may be available at some facilities).
- Set the pump pressure to the setting that is most comfortable for you and is also effective.
 - AMEDA: Turn the vacuum dial to the right of center to turn pump on. Turn the cycle dial to the fastest setting and pump until you start getting let down of your milk. Then turn the cycle dial to the centre once your milk is flowing easily.
 - MEDELA: Turn the pump on.
- When using a single-pumping system, pump each breast twice for 5 minutes each time for a total of 20 minutes (5 minutes on left; 5 minutes on right and repeat) or until your milk flow stops.
- While pumping, use your hands to compress and massage your breasts.
- Take a break from the pump and massage your breasts again. Pay special attention to the outside parts of your breast.
- Hand express each breast. Feel for heavier areas in your breasts and massage/express those areas. Switch back and forth letting the milk drip into the pump flange.
- Finish expressing in a way that works for you. Either hand express or pump each breast. It may take about 25 minutes to do all the steps. Develop your own method.

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Hands-on Pumping

Hands-on pumping can be done while single or double pumping. By combining breast massage, hand expression, and pumping you can double the amount of milk removed than if only a breast pump was used.

VIDEO: We recommend you watch “Maximizing Milk Production with Hands-On Pumping” at <https://stan.md/2J832CS>



- Use breast compressions while pumping to get more milk out of your breast.
- Grasp a big handful of breast. Hands-on pumping is like hand expression but you will have more of the breast in your hands and your fingers are further away from your nipple.
- Bring your thumb and fingers together, compressing the breast.
- This should be done firmly, but not so hard it hurts or causes the tissue to bruise.

Tips to improve results

- If you know you will need to express your breast milk, start to express by hand as soon after birth as possible. Try to do this in the first 1-6 hours. The sooner, the better.
- Pump your breasts every 2-3 hours, including once or twice at night, when milk producing hormones are highest. It is the frequency rather than the length of the pumping session that will increase milk production.
- When your breasts are full, a message is sent to your brain to slow down milk production so it is **NOT** helpful to delay pumping until your breasts ‘fill up’.
- If your baby is breastfeeding, it is also helpful to pump right after your baby has fed.

Helping your milk ‘let down’

- Pump in a quiet place and relax.
- The sight and smell of your baby can help with let down.
- Spend time cuddling baby skin-to-skin before pumping.

Collecting and storing expressed breast milk

- Label the container with your name as well as the date and time you pumped.
- Place it in the refrigerator.

Cleaning Breast Pump Equipment

- Wash pump parts in a basin, not the sink.
- Wash all the pump parts that could come in contact with your milk under cold running water. Then put them in a basin of hot soapy water.
- The pump tubing and white connector do not need to be washed as they do not come in contact with breast milk.
- Wash, rinse, and place the pump parts on a clean towel and allow to air dry.
- Place the clean pump parts in the clean dry basin and cover.
- Other mothers/parents may also be using the pump. Please put your tubing(s) and connector (attached to one another) on top of the towel, in the basin, with your pump parts.
- Store your pump parts away from the sink.