

Pumping Breast Milk for Baby

» A Patient Guide to Expressing Milk

Breast milk provides many nutrients, is easier to digest than formula and includes antibodies that boost a baby's immune system.

But sometimes you can't be with your baby for every feeding. By using a breast pump, you can store milk to feed your baby when you're not near him.

Buying a Pump

Breast pumps fall into two categories: electric or battery-powered pumps and manual pumps, which are operated by hand.

Top-end electric personal pumps, which weigh 8 pounds or less, are often used by mothers who work full time.

Electric pumps have adjustable suction levels, and some can pump both breasts at once. These pumps, usually priced at a few hundred dollars, also tend to be the most expensive.

Mid-priced electric or battery-powered pumps are best when you'll be away from your baby for a short time, like when you leave him with a babysitter. Many of these pumps weigh less than 2 pounds, making them more portable and affordable. These models take longer to collect milk, and most allow you to only pump one breast at a time.

Manual pumps require you to pump a piston or squeeze a lever to collect milk. Manual pumps are usually cheaper, smaller, lighter and quieter than electric pumps. Some moms like a manual pump's simplicity and say that it more closely matches a baby's sucking. Other mothers say a manual pump is too slow and can be tiring.

When you shop for a breast pump, consider how easy it is to use and whether the suction control is adjustable.

Renting a Pump

If you don't want to purchase your own pump or you're pumping often, you might want to rent a hospital-grade electric breast pump, which has a rapid suck-and-release cycle to pump quickly. This type of pump allows you to pump both breasts at the same time.

These models cost more than \$1,000, but they can be rented from many hospitals, lactation consultants or medical supply stores for about \$1 to \$3 a day. You will still have to buy a collection kit to ensure that your milk is collected without exposure to germs.

You should not borrow or share a breast pump, nor should you buy one

that has been previously used. Breast milk can carry bacteria and viruses that can contaminate the pump and pass infection.

How to Pump

When you're ready to pump, find a quiet place to relax. It may help to massage your breasts or apply a warm compress to the breasts before pumping. Follow the instructions provided with your pump.

Pump your breasts often, to help you produce more milk. If possible, pump both breasts at the same time because this prompts your body to produce more prolactin, a hormone that helps you produce more milk.

Continue to breastfeed your baby when you're together so that your milk supply is greater when you pump. You can also pump after breastfeeding. Even if no milk is produced, the sucking action of the pump can help increase milk supply.

Remember to make healthy lifestyle choices while you're breastfeeding. Eat lots of fruit, vegetables and whole grains, drink plenty of fluids, rest as much as you can, and don't smoke or drink alcohol.

Storing the Milk

Store your breast milk in a plastic or glass bottle with a top that can be sealed, or in a sterile bag that can be sealed. To avoid wasting milk, store it in the amounts you use every day. After pumping your breast milk, allow it to cool. You can also freeze the milk if it's not going to be used right away.

Breast milk can be stored in a refrigerator for 3 to 8 days or in the freezer for up to 3 months (the back is the coldest).

Thaw breast milk by swirling the container in warm water or putting the milk in the refrigerator the day before you'll use it. Don't put frozen breast milk in a microwave to thaw because the milk can get too hot and burn the baby. Plus, microwaving destroys valuable proteins in the milk.

You can keep thawed breast milk in the refrigerator for up to 24 hours, but do not refreeze the milk.

Returning to Work

Practice pumping for a week or two before you return to work. At work, create a "pumping room" for privacy. You'll need a chair and an electric outlet, a sink for cleanup and a refrigerator or cooler to store the milk. If you're working full time, you should try to pump as often as your baby feeds. **NP**

Additional Notes:
