

Breast Massage, Expression and 'Hands on' Pumping of Mother's Milk

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An agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority

Help your milk to flow by doing breast massage, breast compression, hand expression and using an electric pump. This pamphlet describes how to use these methods.

1. In the first 24 hours most mothers get small amounts of milk. Hand expression works better than using a pump during this time.

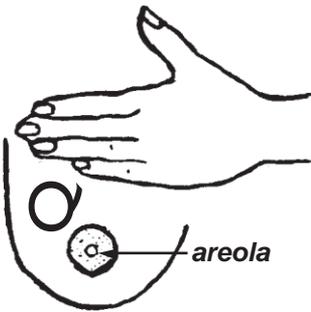


TIP: <http://newborns.stanford.edu/Breastfeeding/HandExpression.html> is a useful video to watch. If you have a BCW postpartum room, you can watch the entire video on channel 68 - the parent channel.

2. By the end of the first 24 hours it is best to do breast massage, hand expression, breast compression and pumping.
3. This helps increase your milk supply.
4. When you use both your hands and an electric pump it is called “hands on pumping”.

A. How do I do breast massage?

1. Wash hands with soap and water.
2. Relax, take deep breaths, and think positive thoughts about your baby.
3. Massage your breasts by:



- a) placing fingers at the top of the breast and firmly pressing them into the chest wall. Then move your fingers in a circular motion on one spot on the skin;
- b) after a few seconds, move to the next area, slowly moving around the breast. Continue to do this, moving closer to the brownish area which is called the areola.

Heat helps the milk flow. Try wrapping each breast in warm moist towels for 10 minutes before expressing. Taking a bath or shower so the breasts are covered with warm water also helps.

If your breasts have become hard, apply cold gel packs or compresses to help reduce swelling before and after massaging and expressing.

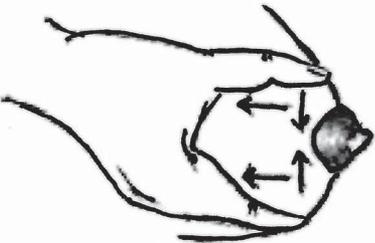
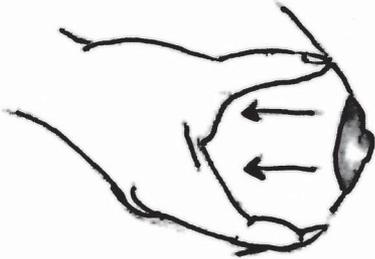
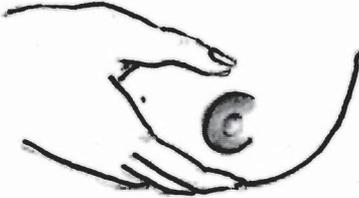


B. How do I do hand expression?

Hand expressing your milk takes time to learn. You will get better with practice. Massaging your breast and using moist heat or cuddling your baby skin-to-skin before you hand express will help. Before starting, get comfortable and take a moment to relax.



1. Wash your hands with soap and water.
2. Gently rub your nipple.
3. Hold a clean container, cup or wide-mouthed jar under the nipple. If your baby is in the NICU, use the sterile container provided.
4. Cup the breast in one hand. Place your thumb and fore-finger about 5 cm or 2 inches behind the nipple.
5. Press your fingers back toward the chest wall and then towards each other gently squeezing the thumb and finger together. Repeat rhythmically.
6. Rotate your hand to reach all around the areola. Change sides every few minutes, using one hand, then the other, on both breasts.
7. Express until no more milk comes out, at least 10 to 15 minutes each breast.
8. Express milk about every 2-3 hours if your baby is unable to nurse 8 or more times in 24 hours.



The first few times you may not get very much colostrum or milk and it may take you up to 45 minutes to express both breasts. After some practise you will be finished in 20 to 30 minutes.

C. How do I do compression?

Put your hand on your chest wall:

- cup your breast tissue and apply firm pressure but not hard enough to bruise!
- Slide your fingers towards your nipple.

Using compression while pumping helps get all the milk out of your breast. It also encourages your body to make more milk.

D. How do I do ‘hand’s on’ pumping?

“Hands on” pumping means using your hands and the electric pump together. Each time you express and pump:

Use the following tips to develop your own method. You will discover what helps you get the most milk out.

1. **Start by massaging both breasts before pumping** or cuddling your baby skin-to-skin.
2. **While pumping, feel for heavier areas in your breasts and massage those areas.** If you would like to double pump while massaging, you’ll need a bra or your partner to help you hold the flanges of the pump in place.
3. **While pumping, you can also use hand compression to help you get the most milk out.** You can stop pumping once milk stops flowing and spraying.
4. **Finish by massaging your breasts again and hand expressing each breast,** letting the milk drop into the pump flange.

It’s good to ask!

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Drawings from the BC Baby-Friendly Initiative Resource Binder