



## How to Express Breastmilk

Expressing is when a mother collects her own milk by gently milking her breasts. This can be by hand or with a breast pump (manual or electric).

### Why express?

- if you need to go out
- if you are returning to work
- if your baby is unable or unwilling to breastfeed
- if your baby is premature or in hospital or you are in hospital
- if you need to increase your milk supply
- if you are overfull and uncomfortable or have a blocked duct or mastitis

### When expressing

- It is important that your milk lets down when you express (see Fact Sheet *How Breastfeeding Works*).
- Sit comfortably.
- Breathe deeply and consciously relax your body.
- Apply warmth by using gentle heat from a warm cloth.
- Lightly massage your breast towards the nipple before and during expressing.
- Encourage stimulation by gently rolling your nipple between your fingers.
- Think about your baby and/or look at his photo.
- Have a routine, such as preparing a drink and sitting in the same chair for expressing.

### How to hand express

- Gently warm your skin and stimulate the nipples.
- Place your four fingers under your breast, with your thumb on top **of your breast**, several centimetres back from the nipple. Press the thumb in slightly towards the chest wall and then move it towards your fingers on the other side of the breast.
- Squeeze the breast tissue under the skin. Milk will squirt out. Keep squeezing the breast in a rhythmic way like a baby sucking until the flow of milk stops
- Move your hand around the breast. Continue to rotate the position of your hand until the flow lessens, then start on the other breast
- Your hands may tire easily to start with, so change hands and breasts often to rest them. Your hands will become stronger with practice.
- Use a clean, wide-mouthed deep bowl to catch the milk.
- Place a clean towel over your knees to catch drips and dry your hands.

### **Cleanliness is very important**

- Thoroughly wash and rinse all containers used (see Fact Sheet *How to Store Breastmilk* for instructions).
- Wash your hands well with soap and water.
- Express into a wide-mouthed deep bowl.
- Pour milk carefully into a clean container, put the lid on and label with the date (see Fact Sheet *How to Store Breastmilk*).

Expressing milk by hand is similar to the action of your baby sucking. With practice you will become very fast. Never judge your overall production by what you are able to express, as your baby drains the breast more efficiently.

Ask the nursing staff in hospital to show you how to express, or ask an Australian Breastfeeding Association counsellor.

### **Breast pumps**

- Suitable manual breast pumps are available in pharmacies and from the Australian Breastfeeding Association. Only consider good quality pumps that use a piston action to create suction.
- Electric breast pumps range from small personal-use pumps for occasional expressing, through robust pumps designed for mothers in the paid work force, to types that are used in hospitals and can be rented for home use if the mother needs to do frequent expressing. The Australian Breastfeeding Association has this last type of electric pump available for rental.

For more information contact your Child Health Centre or the Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA).

**Breastfeeding Helpline**  
**1800 mum 2 mum**

**1 800 6 86 2 6 8**

The ABA Breastfeeding Helpline is available 7 days a week and is staffed by trained volunteer breastfeeding counsellors.

If you need help making phone calls in English, ring the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) on 131 450.

Email counselling and more information is available at [www.breastfeeding.asn.au](http://www.breastfeeding.asn.au)