

Let's Talk About...

Breast Pumping While Your Baby is in the Hospital

If you can't breastfeed your baby while your baby is in the hospital, you will need to use a breast pump. If you pump as often as your baby would normally breastfeed, this will help bring in and keep a good milk supply. Remember to always wash your hands before pumping.

Are there breast pumps in the hospital?

Breast pumps are available for you while you are at the hospital. Ask your baby's nurse where to find them.

How often should I use the breast pump?

We recommend 10–20 minutes of pumping on each breast (if you're using a double pump this is faster) seven times in the daytime. You should also pump once more in the middle of the night. Pumping should not hurt. If pumping hurts or you feel the pump is not emptying the milk from your breast, you may need a larger flange size. Talk to your nurse or to the lactation specialist. Here is a pumping schedule sample:

- 3 AM | 8 AM | 10 AM | Noon
- 3 PM | 5 PM | 7 PM | 10 PM

Many mothers find that setting exact times for pumping and staying on that schedule makes pumping easier. But you don't have to have a strict schedule. It's most important to pump 8 times in 24 hours and fully empty the breast.

How much milk should I produce?

Milk production is based on supply and demand. When you first start pumping, you may not get much milk—perhaps only a few drops at a time. Your milk supply will gradually increase. The more you pump or breastfeed, the more milk you'll produce.

Use a pumping log to track when you pump and how much you pump each time. The goal is to produce 24 ounces of milk each day when your baby is 2 weeks old. When your baby is a month old, you should produce 25–35 ounces each day.

How do I clean the breast pump kit after use?

When you buy or rent a breast pump, you'll get a pump kit with it. This includes collection bottles, flanges (the plastic funnels that fit over your breasts), and the tubing that connects the flanges to the pump machine. Here's how to clean your kit:

- After every pumping session, wash the flanges and bottles with hot soapy water. (Don't get the tubing wet. You only need to wash the flanges and bottles, not the tubing.)
- Once a day, sanitize the flanges and bottles. You can wash them in the dishwasher or boil the parts for 20 minutes. If you have hard water, add 1–2 tablespoons of white vinegar to the pot of water. This helps prevent mineral deposits from building up on the kit.
- You can also use a Medela quick clean microsteam bag. You can buy this online or at a lactation supply store.

How do I store the milk?

Store your milk in the human milk storage containers provided by the hospital. Be sure to take some home with you. Follow these directions when storing milk:

- Always label the container. Use a printed hospital ID label with your baby's name and medical number on it. Write the date and time you pumped on the label.
- Don't mix milk from different pumping sessions. Never add freshly pumped milk to milk already in your refrigerator or freezer. Milk from each pumping should be stored separately.

- Refrigerate or freeze the milk immediately after pumping. If your baby will take the milk within 2 days, refrigerate it. If not, put the milk in the back of your freezer, not in the door. Frozen milk can be kept for 3 months in a regular freezer and for 6 months in a deep freeze.

How do I keep my breastmilk safe?

To make sure your milk is given only to your baby, each labeled container of your milk will be checked several times. Your baby’s name and hospital number will be scanned for verification when:

- You bring the milk into the unit or Mothers Milk Center when your baby is admitted to the hospital
- The milk is prepared to be fed to your baby
- You take your milk home

You are responsible to work with the staff members to make sure you only take your expressed milk home. You share responsibility to make sure a staff member verifies your expressed milk before you take it home at any time. You protect yourself and your baby by participating in breastmilk checks.

How do I get a breast pump for home use?

We recommend the hospital-quality Medela® or Ameda® electric breast pumps. They give the most stimulation with the best comfort. Some private insurance plans will pay for you to rent a hospital-quality breast pump to use at home while your baby is in the hospital. Talk to your insurance company to get this approved.

If you are on WIC, you may be able to get a free pump. Pumps you can buy at the store (hand-, electric-, or battery-powered) most often do not stimulate the breasts best. We strongly advise against using those until your baby is breastfeeding well.

How do I transport breastmilk?

As you bring pumped milk from your home to the hospital, follow these rules:

- **For refrigerated milk.** Keep the milk cool by packing it in a cooler with ice.
- **For frozen milk.** Put the frozen containers in a cooler, but do NOT pack the cooler with ice. (Believe it or not, ice will actually speed up the thawing of frozen milk.) Instead, fill the cooler’s empty spaces with a towel or with styrofoam beads.
Note: Once frozen milk thaws, you need to use it within a day.

Does stress affect milk supply?

You have a lot of stress in your life now. Stress can block the let-down reflex and reduce milk flow. Your milk supply can change during the day depending on your baby’s condition. If you have extreme stress, you may not be able to pump any milk at all, even though milk is still in your breast. This is temporary. It is important to keep pumping regularly to keep a good milk supply. Ask to speak with a lactation specialist if you have questions.

Tips for taking care of yourself

Every day, drink enough so that you don’t feel thirsty. Limit caffeine intake.

Eat at least three balanced meals and two healthy snacks every day. Have your partner, parent or friend prepare food ahead of time for you.

- Set up a pump station at home. You might use a pump, thermos of water or juice glass, a picture of your baby, a novel, and the TV remote.
- Turn off your phone and put a “do not disturb” sign on the door. It can be very helpful to hand massage the breast before pumping. Take a shower or place a warm, wet washcloth on your breasts. Then close your eyes and think of your baby. Naps do wonders!

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