

Hand Expression

Learning how to hand express is an important skill for mothers.

Reasons to Hand Express

- A drop of colostrum/breastmilk can be applied to your nipples to keep them moist and lessen the risk of infection.
- A drop of colostrum/breastmilk on your nipple can encourage your baby to latch and feed.
- Expressing breastmilk can soften the area around your nipple to help your baby latch.
- Expressing breastmilk can relieve breast discomfort.
- Colostrum is thick and it can be more easily removed by hand expression than by pumping.
- Expressing colostrum/breastmilk can help establish and build your milk supply.
- Expressed colostrum/breastmilk can be fed to your baby.

Tips to Help Your Milk Flow

- Find a comfortable place to express.
- Relax and think about your baby.
- Look at your baby or a picture of your baby.
- Try a warm shower or place a warm cloth on your breasts before you begin.
- Learn where to place your fingers on the breast. Try different positions until you find what works best for you.
- Drops of milk may not appear right away. Continue practicing and ask for help if needed.

The Collection Container

- Talk to your health care provider about the best type of collection container to use and how to clean the collection container.
- If you are expressing colostrum expect to collect a few drops to a teaspoon at first. A small collection container is fine to use.
- If you are expressing breastmilk you will need a larger collection container. Choose one with a wide opening. Be sure it is clean before you begin.

Hand expression is a learned skill. You get better by practicing

FACT SHEET
fact sheet

How to Hand Express



- Wash your hands before expressing your breastmilk.



- Gently massage each breast to make the milk flow more easily.
- Stroke down towards the nipple.



- Place your thumb near the dark skin and cup the rest of your hand under your breast.
- Gently squeeze your thumb and forefinger together, while same time pressing your hand back towards your breast.



- Express your milk until no more comes out. Then rotate your fingers to another place outside the dark area and repeat.
- You can switch from breast to breast until the milk flow stops completely.

Videos on hand expression can be viewed at:

<https://www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca/home/articles/video-hand-expressing-breastmilk>

<https://globalhealthmedia.org/portfolio-items/how-to-express-breastmilk/>

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Baby Friendly Initiative