

Breast milk is important to your baby's growth and development.

NICU: Breast Pump Usage and Milk Storage Guidelines

Breast milk is important to your baby's growth and development. It provides needed nutrition. Breast milk also aids digestion and helps prevent allergies and infections (not provided by formula). Northwestern Medicine is here to support you in providing breast milk for your baby.

Until your baby can nurse directly from you, your pumped breast milk can be given to the baby. Using a breast pump also helps ensure that you develop a good milk supply. This pamphlet describes how to:

- Begin using a double electric breast pump.
- Store breast milk for use in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU).
- Prepare your infant for breastfeeding.

For more information, refer to the written insert that comes with each breast pump.

Getting started

To mimic the baby's normal feeding pattern, pump your breasts every 2 to 3 hours. Do this 8 to 12 times a day and track the amount using the Breast Pump Log. It is best to begin as soon as possible after delivery (by 6 hours). This will help you develop a good milk supply. Your nurse will show you how to pump.

During your hospital stay, you are given a plastic breast pump kit to be used with the hospital's electric pump. (Keep this kit. It can be used at home if you select the same brand of pump used in the hospital.) Once you go home, a high quality, double electric breast pump can usually be obtained through your insurance. However, you may choose to buy or rent a pump.

Your nurse can answer any questions about:

- The types of pumps.
- How to rent or obtain a pump through insurance.
- Pump usage.

When you are ready to pump:

1. **Have something to drink next to you.** You will find that you will be thirsty. Please note: In the NICU, moms may have water in a bottle or covered cup at the bedside to drink.
2. **Wash your hands.** Since babies in the NICU may be more prone to infections, it is important to wash your hands with soap and water before touching:
 - Any of the pump parts
 - Your breasts
 - Breast milk
3. **Assemble breast pump equipment.**
4. **Relax and be comfortable.** This helps your milk flow more easily (letdown). Select a comfortable chair with good back support. If you cannot be with your baby during the time you are pumping, listening to music or relaxation tapes, or looking at a picture of your baby can be helpful. Before pumping or feeding, breast massage may also aid letdown and increase milk flow. Kangaroo care (skin to skin contact) before and after pumping can help increase your milk supply.
5. **Try hand expressing before pumping to remove more colostrum from your breasts in the first few days.** It is important to collect any drops you express since colostrum contains substances that help protect your baby against infection. It also prepares baby's intestines to digest milk. Ask your nurse to show you how to hand express, or view the video available in your postpartum room.
6. **Pump both breasts at the same time.** Always pump for 15 to 20 minutes at a time, no longer. It is normal to get only a few drops the first time you pump. Keep in mind, milk production is a process of "supply and demand." The amount increases each day, but varies with every pumping session. The more often you pump, the more milk you will produce.

Remember

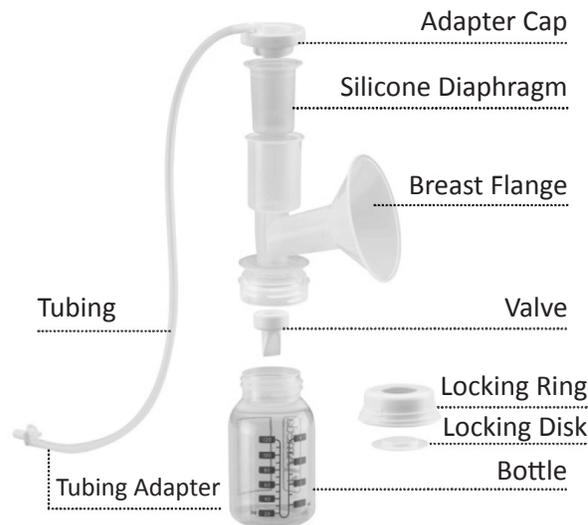
- Begin pumping at a low suction. Slowly increase the suction as far as possible without causing pain. If you feel pain or tension, try decreasing the suction to a more comfortable level. Make sure you have the right flange size that is not too tight or too large. Your nurse can help you find the best-fitting flange.
- Keep a record on the Breast Pump Log. Write down the time you pump and the amount of breast milk obtained.
- Breast pumps are available for your use at your baby's bedside. We invite you to use them as needed while visiting your baby. However, it is important for you to bring your personal breast pump kit as the NICU does not have extra parts.

Care of the pump equipment

During your hospital stay

While in the hospital, after each use, wash all the parts of the pump that touch your breasts (found in the breast pump kit):

1. Disconnect the breast pump parts.
2. Rinse each part with cold water (except the tubing, adapter cap, and tubing adapter).
3. Then wash the parts with warm water and the soap provided by your nurse.
4. Rinse the parts with warm, clean water. Be sure to rinse off all the soap.
5. Air dry parts on a clean paper towel.
6. Cover parts with a clean towel if not planning to use again right away.



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At home

At home you may hand wash with dish soap, or wash the large plastic pieces (breast flanges and bottles) in the dishwasher. **Always wash the white valves and diaphragms by hand – not in the dishwasher.** (The high temperatures will cause these pieces to melt.) You do not need to wash the plastic tubing, adapter cap, or tubing adapter.

If you have questions about pumping, please ask your nurse. For specific breast pump information, contact the manufacturer directly.

Breast milk storage

While your baby is in the NICU, breast milk may be kept in the unit's breast milk freezer or refrigerator. Your baby's nurse will give you:

- A supply of bottles with lids.
- Labels preprinted with your baby's first and last name and medical record number.

Fill the bottles about 3/4 full. This allows the milk to expand during freezing. Seal the container well. With an ink pen, write on the pre-printed label the date and time of pumping.

If you have twins (or multiples), label each container of breast milk with the names and medical record numbers of all the babies. Apply the pre-printed labels firmly to the container.

While staying in the mother/baby unit, plan to bring the milk to the NICU within 4 hours after you pump.

Once you are at home, it is important to keep the breast milk cool. Place it in the refrigerator right after pumping. Refrigerated milk should be brought to the hospital within 72 hours. Transport the milk in a cooler with frozen gel packs or ice.

For your baby's safety, follow these breast milk storage guidelines:

Type of milk	Room temperature	Cooler with 3 frozen gel packs	Refrigerator
Fresh, expressed (pumped) milk	4 hours	Up to 8 hours	72 hours

When you arrive in the NICU, be sure to give the breast milk to the nurse right away. For your baby's safety, breast milk may be refrigerated for only 72 hours after pumping. After 72 hours, it must be frozen either in the NICU or at home.

Please Note:

- It is helpful to call the NICU to let the nurse know when you are planning to bring breast milk to the unit.
- If the NICU nurse instructs you to freeze your milk, be sure to store it in the back of the freezer (not in the door). Keep in mind, thawed breast milk is only good for 24 hours.

Preparing your infant for breastfeeding

Until your baby is ready and able to nurse directly from you, holding and skin to skin contact with your baby (kangaroo care) is helpful. This encourages breastfeeding, increases milk supply, and comforts your baby. Talk to your baby's nurse, or physician about your baby's "readiness" to be placed at the breast to feed.

When your baby is ready to breastfeed, your baby's nurse will help you with breastfeeding.

For more information

Please talk with the nurse if you have any questions about pumping, milk storage, kangaroo care or breastfeeding. For more information, contact the La Leche League at www.LLLI.org or 877.452.5324 or the International Lactation Consultant Association at www.ilca.org.

Breast Pump Log

- Plan to pump 8 to 12 times in a 24-hour day.
- Each time you pump, please write down the amount (in mL) of breast milk obtained.
- At the end of each day, total amount of milk pumped.

Day/ Date	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
Midnight							
1:00 am							
2:00 am							
3:00 am							
4:00 am							
5:00 am							
6:00 am							
7:00 am							
8:00 am							
9:00 am							
10:00 am							
11:00 am							
12:00 noon							
1:00 pm							
2:00 pm							
3:00 pm							
4:00 pm							
5:00 pm							
6:00 pm							
7:00 pm							
8:00 pm							
9:00 pm							
10:00 pm							
11:00 pm							
24-hour Total							

For a mother who only is pumping (not breastfeeding), it takes about 10 to 14 days to establish the milk supply. So, by the time a baby is 2 weeks old, a mother should get 500 to 1050 mL in a 24-hour period (or 30 to 90 mL per breast each time you pump). Please remember that this is a gradual process. In the first several days after birth, it is normal to only pump drops each time. It is important to continue pumping to maintain your hormone levels and prevent engorgement. If you have concerns about your production, please talk to your baby's nurse to help you.