

If you have any questions or concerns, please speak with your nurse.

NICU: Breast Pump Usage and Milk Storage Guidelines

Breast milk is important to your baby's growth and development. It gives your baby the nutrition they need. Breast milk also helps with digestion and protects against allergies and infections. Formula does not provide this protection.

A breast pump can help you feed your baby your breast milk when you are not able to directly nurse. Using a breast pump also helps to make sure that you have a good milk supply. This handout describes how to:

- Use 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, see the written insert that comes with each breast pump. Ask your nurse if you need more help.

Getting started

To copy the baby's normal feeding pattern, pump your breasts every 2 to 3 hours (about 8 to 12 times a day). Track the amount using the Breast Pump Log or an electronic tracking application. It is best to start pumping 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, we will give you a plastic breast pump kit to use with the hospital's electric pump. (Keep this kit. You can use it at home if you have the same brand of pump used in the hospital.) Once you go home, you may be able get a high-quality, double electric breast pump through your insurance. Or you may choose to buy or rent a pump.

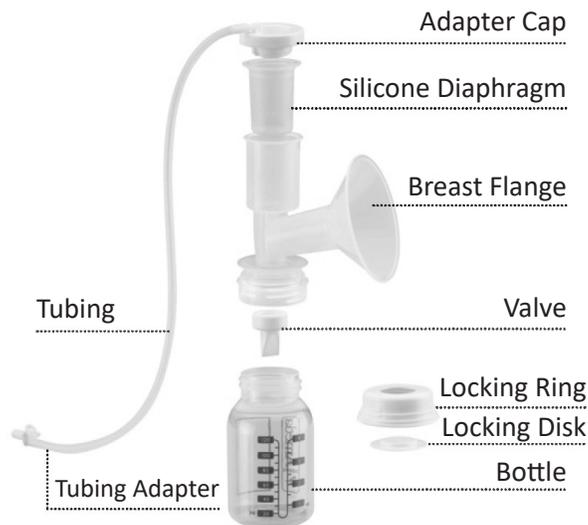
Your nurse can answer any questions about:

- The different types of breast pumps
- How to rent or get a pump through insurance
- Pump usage

When you are ready to pump:

1. **Have something to drink next to you.** Pumping milk and breastfeeding, in general, can make you very thirsty. Please note: In the NICU, moms may have water in a bottle or in a covered cup at the bedside.
2. **Wash your hands.** Babies in the NICU may be more prone to infections. So it is important to wash your hands with soap and water before you touch:
 - Any of the pump parts
 - Your breasts
 - Breast milk
3. **Assemble the breast pump equipment (Figure 1).** 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.

Figure 1. Breast pump



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4. **Relax and be comfortable.** This helps your milk flow more easily (letdown). Choose a comfortable chair with good back support. Try to be near your baby when you pump milk. If you cannot be with your baby, listening to music, reading something positive or looking at a picture of your baby can be helpful. Before pumping or feeding, a breast massage may help with letdown and increase milk flow. Kangaroo care (skin-to-skin contact) before and after pumping can also help increase your milk supply.
5. **Try hand expressing your breast milk before pumping to remove more colostrum from your breasts in the 1st few days after delivery.** Colostrum is the first milk your body produces. It has nutrients that help protect your baby against infection. It is important to collect any drops you express. It also prepares baby's intestines to digest milk. Ask your nurse to show you how to hand express breast milk. You can also watch the video, "Hand Expression", at firstdroplets.com/downloads.

6. **Begin pumping at a high speed, but 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. Once your milk begins to flow, decrease the pump speed and increase the suction for better milk removal. The suction should feel powerful, but not painful. Adjust the level of suction based on your comfort level.
7. **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 1st time you pump. Keep in mind, milk production is a process of “supply and demand.” The amount increases each day but changes with every pumping session. The more often you pump, the more milk you will produce. Using a pumping bra can allow you to be hands-free while pumping. If you do not have a pumping bra, you can use an old bra or sports bra and cut holes in the middle to let the flanges fit inside.

Remember

- If you are only pumping breast milk and not breastfeeding, it takes about 10 to 14 days to establish your milk supply. So, by the time your baby is 2 weeks old, you should get 500 to 1,050 milliliters (mL) in a 24-hour period (or 30 to 90 mL per breast each time you pump). Remember that this is a slow process. In the 1st 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 breast engorgement. If you have concerns about your milk production, please talk with your baby’s nurse to help you.
- Keep a record on the Breast Pump Log or an electronic tracking application. Enter the time you pump and the amount of breast milk collected.
- You can use the NICU breast pump 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

Wash all the parts of the pump that touch your breasts after each use in the hospital. Follow the steps below to care for the pump equipment.

1. Disconnect the breast pump parts.
2. Rinse each part with cold water (except the tubing, adapter cap and tubing adapter).
3. 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. Do not let the parts soak in soapy water.
5. Air dry parts on a clean paper towel.
6. Cover parts with a clean towel if you are not planning to use it again right away.

At home

At home you may hand wash the breast pump parts. You can use 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, you can keep your breast milk in the unit’s breast milk freezer or refrigerator. Your baby’s nurse will give you:

- Bottles with lids
- Labels pre-printed 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. Write the date and time of each pumping on the pre-printed label with an ink pen.

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. You should bring refrigerated breast milk to the hospital within 4 days. 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	Stored at Room Temperature	Stored in a Cooler With 3 Frozen Gel Packs	Stored in the Refrigerator	Stored in the Freezer
Fresh, expressed pumped milk	Up to 4 hours	Up to 8 hours	Up to 4 days	Best used within 6 months, but storing up to 12 months is OK
Thawed, previously frozen	Up to 2 hours	Up to 2 hours	Up to 2 hours	Never refreeze thawed breast milk

Give the breast milk to the nurse right away when you arrive in the NICU. For your baby's safety, you may refrigerate breast milk for only 96 hours (4 days) after pumping. After 96 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 your breast, 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 breastfeed from your breast.

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 **lilli.org** or 877.452.5324.

Breast Pump Log

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

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