

Expressing Your Milk

- If breastfeeding is going normally, it's recommended to exclusively feed your baby at the breast for the first 3-4 weeks of life. The goal is to make sure you and your baby are comfortable with latching and that the baby can create the milk production they need. After 3-4 weeks you can introduce the bottle for more flexibility or in preparation for a return to work.
- Things may happen that you need to express milk before weeks 3-4 weeks. If you feel uncomfortable fullness known as engorgement, which commonly occurs on days 3-5 after delivery, this can be an indication to express milk with your hands or a pump to soften your breasts. You don't need to pump to empty as this can increase your risk of engorgement and mastitis.
- If breastfeeding isn't going normally and your baby has a medical indication for supplementation such as losing too much weight, not gaining enough weight, inadequate urine and stooling pattern, jaundice, or poor feeding, this is an indication to start expressing your milk. It's best to work with a lactation provider to help you to optimize your milk production and make sure your infant is gaining weight well.
- You can use your hands, a manual pump, or an electric pump to express your milk.
- Most insurance companies are providing lactating parents with a double electric breast pump. It's best to contact your insurance company as early as possible to obtain your pump in case you need it early for engorgement or low production.
- Be careful with manual suction pumps, they can pull a large amount of your breast tissue into the pump and cause pain and trauma.
- You can bring your pump to your visit with a lactation provider to go over its use, and your flange fit to optimize comfort and efficient milk removal.
- Being separated from your baby and returning to work are common reasons to express your milk. You can store milk in the freezer in preparation for your return. You can start storing about a month before you return to work. The best time to pump is immediately after the first feed in the morning. You usually have the most milk then and you don't want to take away from the baby's next feeding. You can store a small amount, several days per week, and combine it to freeze in bottles dated with the oldest expressed milk.
- Most lactating parents pump every 3 hours for about 15 minutes a session upon their return to work. Most latch when together and pump when apart.
- If there isn't a designated space for pumping, work with your employer to find a private place to pump. It should be private, secure, have an outlet, and hopefully a sink to wash your hands and pump parts.
- If there's a refrigerator at work, many lactating parents use it and put their expressed milk in a lunch bag so no one accidentally tampers with it. You can use a cooler with cold packs as well.

