



# How to use a breast pump

There may be occasions when a baby isn't able to feed exclusively at the breast e.g. baby is born prematurely, has medical complications or mother returns to work or study. Initially, frequent hand expressing (at least 8 times in 24hrs) will be most effective and comfortable for the mother. Once the milk volume increases and the colostrum changes to transitional milk (known as the 'milk coming in') using a breast pump **in combination with hand expressing** can help to continue establishment and maintenance of the milk supply. As a rough guide, an entire expressing session will take about 30 minutes.

## Choosing a manual pump checklist

Choose a pump that

- Effectively removes milk from your breast
- Is easy for you to use and clean
- Is comfortable and causes you no pain or damage to your nipples or breasts

## How to use a manual breast pump

- Commence with hand expressing
- Centre nipple inside flange of pump, position flange flat against your breast
- Gently pump with a smooth rhythmical action to mimic baby sucking cycles
- Repeat above steps on the other breast and move from breast to breast as often as necessary to stimulate milk flow. Use breast compressions and massage to enhance milk flow (Refer to *Making more milk* fact sheet)
- Finish with hand expressing

## Mini-electric pumps

These pumps are commonly recommended for mothers who need to express once lactation is established e.g. mothers who are returning to paid work or study. Some may be suitable for expressing on an infrequent basis only (i.e. less than four times per day). Check the manufacturer's recommendations.

## Hospital grade electric pumps

These pumps may be useful if:

- you and your baby are separated e.g. baby is premature or unwell and your milk supply is not established
- you are relying on pumped breast milk for all your baby's feeds
- other methods of expressing are not desired or effective

## How to use an electric breast pump

- Commence with hand expressing
- Turn on, start with a gentle vacuum and gradually increase to a comfortable level.
- Start with a fast speed (suck cycle frequency). This aims to mimic baby's sucking action to stimulate milk release. (Some pumps automatically start with a fast cycle and default to a slower cycle after 2 minutes).
- Change to a slower speed when milk begins to flow
- Use breast compressions and massage to enhance milk flow while pumping
- Repeat on other breast and continue swapping between sides when milk flow slows
- Only express for a maximum of 30 minutes in total each time you express (i.e.15 minutes on each breast)

### For more information

- Queensland Health booklet "*Child Health Information Your guide to the first 12 months*"
- Queensland Health Breastfeeding website: <http://www.health.qld.gov.au/breastfeeding/>



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Consumers and/or carers provided feedback on this publication.