

Breastfeeding

HAND EXPRESSION

Many women find that hand expression is an efficient way to pump when only occasional expression is necessary. In the few first days, when colostrum (first milk) is present and milk volume is not abundant, it is easier to express by hand than with a breast pump. When milk volume increases, many women find hand expression the easiest way as well.



HAND EXPRESSION IS HELPFUL

- To provide breast milk to a baby that will not latch.
- To relieve breast fullness or engorgement.
- To provide drops of milk to wake a sleepy baby or coax a baby to the breast that is having difficulties latching.
- To help relieve blocked ducts.
- To provide breast milk to rub on sore nipples.
- To soften full breasts to make it easier for baby to latch.
- To increase milk supply by completely draining the breast after a baby finishes nursing or after pumping.

REMEMBER...

- With a newborn it is important to nurse or express milk at least 8 to 12 times per day to maintain a supply.
- Hand expression gets easier with practice and should not hurt.
- The trick to hand expression is discovering where to position your fingers. Experiment until you find what works best for you.
- If you are expressing to increase milk supply, switch back and forth between both breasts. Expressing each side 2 to 3 times may increase milk supply over time.
- If you have concerns about your milk supply, please contact a lactation consultant or breastfeeding expert for assistance.

MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SENIOR SERVICES
WIC and Nutrition Services

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AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY / AFFIRMATIVE ACTION EMPLOYER

When Hand Expression is Helpful

TIPS TO HELP MILK FLOW

- Relax and think about your baby.
- If your baby is not with you, look at a picture of your baby.
- Use warm compresses on your breast.
- Practice in the shower with hot water running on your breast – this works well if trying to soften engorged breasts when your baby is 3 to 5 days old.

HOW TO EXPRESS MILK

- Wash your hands and have a clean wide mouth container to catch the milk.
- To begin, gently massage your breasts for a short time to encourage the let-down or flow of milk.
- Position your thumb on one side of your breast and 2 to 3 fingers on the other side; about 1 to 2 inches back from the nipple.
- Press your breast gently inward towards the wall of your chest.
- Compress your thumb and fingers together.
- Release and repeat; catch drops of milk in the container as they appear.
- When milk flow stops rotate thumb and fingers to another position around the nipple and repeat the process until the breast is drained.
- Express milk the same way from the other breast.
- When done expressing, pour breast milk in a clean bottle or storage container.

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