

# Making the Most of Your Breast Pump

**QUESTION:** What should I do to get ready to pump my milk?

**ANSWER:** First read your breast pump instructions. Find a quiet, comfortable place to sit. Take a drink and snack with you. Make sure your pump is plugged in or has working batteries. Then,

- Wash your hands well with soap and water.
- Assemble the pump kit.
- Center the flanges over your breast(s) to make an air seal.
- For double pumping, it is helpful to use a hands-free bra or position your arm to hold both flanges in place while you turn your pump on. Then re-position your hands around the flanges over your breasts for hands-on pumping.

**QUESTION:** How do I know if the breast flange I am using is the right fit?

**ANSWER:** To check your breast flange fit, watch your nipple during pumping. It is best to watch once your milk flow has started. See the diagrams below to see which one looks like your nipple during pumping.



**Good Fit:** During pumping, your nipple moves freely in the breast flange tunnel. You see space around the nipple. Not much areola is drawn into the tunnel with the nipple.



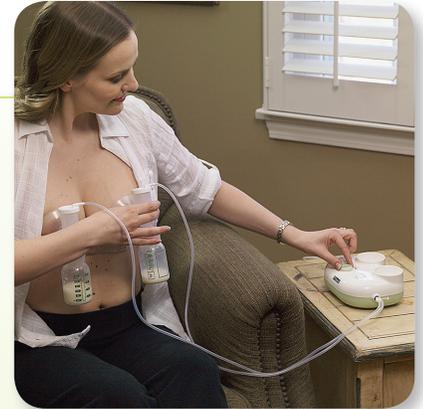
**Too Small:** During pumping, some or all of your nipple rubs against the sides of the breast flange tunnel.



**Too Large:** During pumping, more areola is drawn into the breast flange with your nipple. Your areola may rub against the side of the breast flange tunnel.

\* Additional breast flange sizes may have come with your breast pump or can be purchased separately

*To check your breast flange fit, watch your nipple during pump.*



**QUESTION:** Is there anything I should do with the pump dials/buttons to help drain my breasts of milk?

**ANSWER:** Yes. Think about how your baby breastfeeds. Your baby latches on and sucks quickly until milk is flowing in her mouth. It takes a minute or two for the milk to start flowing. When the milk is flowing, her sucks slow down. When the milk flow slows, she sucks fast again to start another milk ejection reflex or let-down. Most mothers have an average of four milk ejection reflexes during a breastfeeding session.

So, when you start pumping, have the suction at your highest comfortable level and turn the speed up all the way. Be patient, just like with breastfeeding, it can take a minute or two for the milk to start flowing. Once, your milk starts to flow, turn the speed down to allow long, sprays of milk to come out of your breasts. When the milk flow starts to slow or drip, turn the speed back up. This increase in speed helps your body let-down more milk or have a milk ejection reflex. Once, the milk starts to flow again, turn the speed down. Repeat this until you are no longer able to get milk flow and your breasts feel well drained.

**QUESTION:** Is it normal for pumping to hurt?

**ANSWER:** No. If pumping hurts, check:

- **The suction level.** The strongest pump suction does not always pump more milk. You should feel a tugging when you pump, not pain. If you feel pain, your body tenses up and it is harder to release milk. Always, turn the suction level to your highest, comfortable level.
- **The breast flange fit.** If your flange is too small or too large, it can hurt to pump. Your milk may not flow as well if you have the wrong flange fit.

**QUESTION:** What is hands-on pumping?

**ANSWER:** Using your hands to help drain the milk from your breasts well. During breastfeeding, your baby's warm, little hands naturally rest on your breasts massaging and stimulating hormones to help your milk flow and production. You can help mimic your baby by using hands-on pumping techniques while pumping to help drain your breasts better.

**BEFORE:**

- Gently massage your breasts with the pads of your fingers. Use circular motions.
- Gentle, low heat applied to your breasts has been shown to increase time to milk flow.

**DURING:**

- Gentle massage as described above to help drain the alveoli where the milk is stored.
- Compressing your breasts gently with your hand in a C-shape while milk is flowing can help drain your breasts better.

**QUESTION:** Should I hand express after pumping?

**ANSWER:** Yes. Hand expression after pumping has been shown to get those last high-fat sprays and drops of milk out that will help your baby grow. Remove the flange from your breast and place it under your breast as you hand express to collect the milk.

#### References

Jones F. *Best Practice for Expressing, Storing and Handling Human Milk*. 3rd ed. Fort Worth, TX: HMBANA, Inc.; 2011.  
Mohrbacher N. *Breastfeeding Answers Made Simple: A Guide for Helping Mothers*. Amarillo, TX: Hale Publishing, LP; 2010.  
Spangler A. *Breastfeeding: A Parent's Guide*. 9th ed. Cincinnati, OH: Specialty Lithographing Co; 2010.

*You can help mimic your baby by using hands-on pumping techniques while pumping to help drain your breasts better.*



**QUESTION:** What else can I do to help my milk flow while pumping?

**ANSWER:** To trigger more milk ejection reflexes and help your milk flow, you can use your mind and senses. Get comfortable, relax and try a few of these suggestions to see what works best for you:

**Mind:** Close your eyes, relax and imagine your baby breastfeeding, a waterfall or something else that relaxes you.

**Sight:** Look at your baby or a photo of your baby. Some moms prefer looking at a magazine or their favorite book.

**Hearing:** Listen to a recording of your baby cooing. If you are apart, call and check on your baby. Or, listen to your favorite relaxing music.

**Smell:** Lie your baby's blanket or clothing on your shoulder to take in your baby's sweet smells while pumping.

**QUESTION:** How long should I pump?

**ANSWER:** Not everyone drains their breasts in the same amount of time. On average, it takes 10-15 minutes if double pumping. If you find it takes longer, try some of the techniques described in this handout.

*This is general information and does not replace the advice of your healthcare provider. If you have a problem you cannot solve quickly, seek help right away.*

*Every baby is different, if in doubt, contact your physician or other healthcare provider.*