

Learning About Using a Breast Pump



What is a breast pump?

A breast pump is a device that allows you to empty milk from your breasts whenever you want to or need to. Then you can store the milk for later.

Why use a breast pump?

Using a breast pump is a good way to provide the benefits of breastfeeding when you have to be away from your baby. Pumping will help keep up your milk supply. It also prevents the discomfort of your breasts getting too full of milk.

You can also use a breast pump to slowly reduce your milk supply if you have to stop breastfeeding.

What types of breast pumps can you use?

There are different types of breast pumps to choose from.

Manual pumps.

These pumps are operated by hand. They work well to relieve engorgement (when your breasts are too full of milk). They are easy to carry with you, don't require a power supply, and

may be less expensive than other types of pumps. But they are slower than electric or battery-operated pumps and can't be used hands-free.

Electric pumps.

These are designed to be used a lot. Most are faster and more comfortable than manual pumps. Some types closely imitate the action of a breastfeeding infant. They can help you maintain your milk production if you bottle-feed breast milk often. Electric pumps tend to be larger and heavier than manual pumps. But they are also the fastest way to pump milk. Some of the newer models are very lightweight.

Battery-operated pumps.

These are convenient when you don't have an electrical outlet handy. Most battery-operated pumps use a rechargeable battery.

Most breast pumps are easy to use. But if you have any problems with pumping, ask for help. A lactation consultant or other breastfeeding expert can help you learn how to use a breast pump.

How do you use a breast pump?

Pumping milk with a breast pump will probably take 10 to 20 minutes for each breast, but it may take longer. To keep your milk supply up, try to pump at least every 3 to 4 hours, and breastfeed as often as you can.

1. Get to know your pump.

Read all the instructions that came with your pump. Be sure you know how to put it together and how often you'll need to clean and sanitize the parts. It's a good idea to have supplies and spare parts in all the places where you'll use the pump, such as at home and at work.

2. Choose a good place to pump.

Find a spot that's clean, comfortable, and private so you can relax. If you're pumping at work, you may feel more at ease in a room that has a door you can lock. Have water, food, and something to read with you, if you wish.

3. Wash your hands before you touch the breast shield or your breast.

Use soap, and scrub your hands for 10 to 15 seconds. Then rinse well in warm water. Use a clean paper towel to dry your hands.

4. Put the pump together.

As you put it together, check to see that all parts are clean.

5. Get in the mood.

Holding your baby may improve your milk letdown. If you aren't with your baby, try looking at a photo or sniffing a piece of clothing your baby has worn.

6. Position the breast shield over your breast.

Your nipple should be right in the middle of the shield. You may need to try a few different sizes of breast shield to find one that fits you best. Some women use a special bra that holds the shield in place. This lets you have your hands free.

7. Start pumping.

Begin with a low level of suction. Increase suction as your milk starts to flow. Some pumps will do this for you. To know when to stop pumping, watch for signs that your breasts are empty. You will feel a tugging while pumping, but it shouldn't be painful. If it hurts, stop pumping. Change the position of the breast shield, or try a different size of breast shield.

8. Empty both breasts during each pumping session.

After you pump, your breasts should feel soft with no hard areas.

After you finish pumping:

- Put the milk in a refrigerator or cooler right away. It's best to use milk as soon as you can after you pump it. If you won't be using the milk within a few days, you can freeze it. Be sure you know how to store breast milk safely.
- Take the pump apart, and wash well any part that came in contact with your breast or breast milk. Let the parts air-dry.

What should you do if you have trouble pumping?

If you have problems using a breast pump, or if your milk supply is getting smaller, talk to a lactation consultant.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

Where can you learn more?

Go to <http://kp.org/health>

Enter **B125** in the search box to learn more about "**Learning About Using a Breast Pump**".

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