

## I'd like to express my breastmilk

*The volume of breastmilk that you express is not a reflection of your breastmilk supply. It is more that expressing is a knack that can be learnt.*

Whichever way of expressing that you choose, many mothers find that spending a few (3-5 minutes) gently massaging their breasts BEFORE STARTING EXPRESSING helps them to "let down" their breastmilk. It doesn't matter which techniques you use, it just needs to be a gentle touch. You might feel your "let down" as a warm tingly sensation, a strong "pins and needles" feeling or you might not feel it at all. Some mothers like to look at their baby (or if you are separated, a photo or smell some of your baby's clothes). This can help you to prepare for expressing.

### Hand expressing:

Hand expressing your breastmilk is the gentlest way of expressing and often worth a go even if you have a breastpump. It's free and quiet to do as well.

For information and pictures see the DH leaflet Off to the Best Start which your midwife can give you a copy of or you can download it here: [http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH\\_074095](http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_074095)

### When is hand expressing the best way?

- In the first few days, before your breastmilk "comes in"
- If you want to store some expressed breastmilk before your baby is born (from about 37 weeks of pregnancy)
- If your breasts are full and your baby is trying to latch on so you hand express for a couple of minutes to soften your breast before latching him on
- If you don't get on with breastpumps

### Single pumping ie using a hand (manual) breastpump or an electric breastpump expressing one breast at a time:

After massaging your breasts for several minutes, you might well feel that your breasts feel warm and tingly. Your breastmilk might be starting to drip.

This is a basic information sheet although GBSN hopes that it answers some of your questions. If you have further questions you may like to phone a Breastfeeding Counsellor. A list of their phone numbers may be found in the pink leaflet that you brought home from hospital "where to find support when breastfeeding". National Breastfeeding Helpline numbers are on the website. For convenience your baby may be referred to as "he". Written by Elizabeth Mayo, 2009.

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Put the pump to whichever breast lets down more quickly. Start pumping with quick actions to help the milk flow. You'll then find that you can slow the rhythm. You'll see your breastmilk flow then after a while, the flow will slow down.

At this point switch the pump over to your second breast. Express that flow, when the flow slows, switch to the first breast.

Express that flow then when the flow slows, go back to the second breast and so on. Expressing each breast about 4 times, taking a total of about 20 minutes is average.

The advantage of switching between your breasts in this way is that you work with the letdown flows.

### Double pumping:

If you have an electric pump that you can use 2 collection kits, you can express both breasts at the same time.

This is particularly advantageous if:

- Your baby is not likely to get breastfeeding going for a while and so isn't giving your breasts the messages to make breastmilk
- You need to express whilst at work and have little time
- You are separated from your baby (eg he is in hospital)
- You are worried about your milk supply

Double pumping is a bit quicker than single pumping but has been shown to help you express more volume of breastmilk.

After massaging your breasts, you put both collection sets against your breasts and switch on the pump. After a while, you'll see that the flows from both breasts has slowed. At this point you switch off for about a minute, give yourself time for another letdown, switch back on, express the next flows, switch off and so on. Many mothers find that they do about 4 bursts of expressing with this method.

More information about expressing can be found on the Association of Breastfeeding Mothers website [www.abm.me.uk](http://www.abm.me.uk)