

Establishing and Maintaining Your Milk Supply While Exclusively Pumping

Some mothers want to give their babies their own milk, but for varying reasons, are unable to feed their babies directly from their breasts. Even if your baby does not feed at your breast, Your milk is still the best nutrition for your baby. While all mothers may not respond equally to a breast pump, fortunately, there are quality breast pumps that can help you provide your baby with your milk.

If you find yourself an “Exclusive Pumper,” the following suggestions may help you establish and maintain a full milk supply while pumping.

Getting Started

If you know that you will be pumping from the time your baby is born, begin expressing your colostrum as soon as possible – within the first hour if possible. You may find that hand expressing your colostrum is easier and more effective than using a breast pump on the first day. (See link below.) You should continue to hand express your colostrum very frequently that first day. By the second day after your baby is born, begin pumping your breasts with a high-quality electric breast pump. Plan to pump both breasts simultaneous to save time, and because research has shown that this may result in a higher milk supply. Pump at least 8-10 times every 24 hours. You’ll want to pump at night as well as during the day. It is best to avoid going longer than about 4 hours between pumping sessions in the early months. Pump both sides at once for about 10 minutes, then use “hands-on pumping” and/or hand expression to remove any milk that is left behind by the pump. Here is a link to a video on hand expression: <https://med.stanford.edu/newborns/professional-education/breastfeeding/maximizing-milk-production.html>

Once your milk supply begins to increase from drops to ounces, you may want to pump longer. Many women find that pumping for about 2 minutes after the last drop is an effective way to stimulate milk production, but don’t pump longer than 20-30 minutes at a time. Continue to pump frequently. You may find it easiest to set a goal of a number of times per day that you will pump, and work out your own schedule to get all of those pumping sessions in, rather than trying to pump every 2 or 3 hours. This may mean that you pump every hour at times to make up for parts of the day when you aren’t able to pump as frequently. Remember that the number of times you empty your breasts is more important than the total time spent pumping, so even if you have only 5 minutes to get in a quick pump, do it!

Reaching a Full Milk Supply

A full milk supply is 25 to 35 ounces per day. Once you’ve met this goal, you may find that you are able to reduce the number of times per day that you pump and still maintain your supply. You can drop out one pumping session every few days and keep an eye on your milk supply. Every woman is different.

- Feel free to experiment to see how many times a day you need to pump to maintain your milk supply. For you, it might be 8 times or it might be only 5 times, depending on how much milk you can store in your breasts.

MilkWorks
LINCOLN & OMAHA



**Community
Breastfeeding
Center**

5930 S. 58th Street
(in the Trade Center)
Lincoln, NE 68516
(402) 423-6402

MilkWorks O
10818 Elm Street
Rockbrook Village
Omaha, NE 68144
(402) 502-0617

For additional
information:



www.milkworks.org

- Once you have a full milk supply (you pump enough milk that your baby is happy and gaining well), you may be able to stop pumping as often during the night and not see a decrease in your milk supply. Be sure to pump right before you go to bed and first thing in the morning. If you find that you become uncomfortably full, you may pump just a little in the middle of the night, to “take the edge off” your fullness. If your supply should drop, simply increase the number of times you pump.
- You may find that you are able to get enough milk even if you reduce the length of your pumping sessions – some women find that 10-15 minutes is long enough.

Keep an eye on your supply by writing down the total amount you pump in 24 hours every week or so. That way you’ll be able to tell if your supply starts to go down. You can also tell if your supply is decreasing if you need to routinely borrow milk from the freezer to supply enough for daycare.

What if your supply starts to drop?

- It is easier to build your supply back up if you work on it right away. Some ideas are:
- Pump more frequently – go back up to 8-12 pumping sessions per day. Some women do this by leaving their pump out somewhere visible. Try to pump for even just a few minutes every time you pass it by. Be sure to refrigerate or freeze your milk and clean your pump kit at least every 4 hours.
- Pump longer – once the first “let-down” subsides, push the button to set your pump back to the faster “stimulation mode” to see if you can get a second let-down, then go back to the slower “expression mode” again.
- Use “hands-on pumping.”
- Double check the flange size you are using to be sure it is still the best fit for you.
- Consider a galactagogue. (See our information on *Galactagogues*.)

Weaning from the Pump

Once you have decided that you are ready to stop pumping, you will find that gradual weaning is most comfortable. Here are some ideas on how to decrease your supply gradually:

Drop a pumping session every 2 or 3 days. Drop your first pump in the morning and your last pump before you go to bed last.

- Pump for shorter periods of time.
- If you usually pump until you have a certain amount of milk collected, gradually decrease how much you pump each time. The key is gradual. If you decrease too quickly you may be uncomfortable or develop a plugged duct.
- If you find that your breasts become uncomfortably full while weaning, it is ok to pump just to relieve the fullness. Try to avoid the temptation to “empty” your breasts. Remove just enough milk to make yourself more comfortable.

Congratulations on your commitment to giving your baby the best!