



HOW TO HAND EXPRESS BREASTMILK

WHY HAND EXPRESS? Hand expression is a useful tool that every mother should learn and has been shown to produce more milk than using just a pump. Hand expression can boost your long-term milk supply, increasing the amount of breast milk you make for your baby and the duration of your breastfeeding relationship. Hand expression is convenient, free, and always available to provide breast milk to your baby, even in emergencies. In the first few days, it is normal to see only a few drops during hand expression.

WHEN SHOULD I HAND EXPRESS? It can be particularly useful to hand express colostrum during the first few days after delivering your baby. In the postpartum period, hand expression is more effective than pump section. As your milk volume increases, hand expression can be used to relieve engorgement, in place of a breast pump to remove milk, and can be done anytime to collect milk for your baby.

HOW DO I HAND EXPRESS? You will need to develop a rhythm of “**PRESS, COMPRESS, RELAX**” during hand expression. First, place your hands over your breasts and gently massage. Second, form a “C” with your fingers about an inch back from the edge of the dark area around the nipple (the areola) with your nipple midway between your thumb and index (pointing) finger. Then,

1. **WASH HANDS** when possible.
2. **RELAX** and gently massage.
3. **PRESS** back toward your chest by using a “C”.
4. **COMPRESS** your breast with the soft pads of your thumb and index finger. Continue to press backward (inward) and avoid sliding your fingers down toward the nipple.
5. **RELAX** the pressure and start over.
6. **GO BACK AND FORTH** from 1 breast to the other (right, to left, to right) with up to about 10 compressions on each breast before switching. As you learn to express your milk, you will discover the “sweet spots” where the milk drops will come out the easiest.
7. **COLLECT YOUR MILK** into a spoon, syringe, cup, or into the breast shield of the pump.

Adapted from: Using Your Hands to Express Your Milk by Dr. Anne Merewood PhD, MPH, IBCLC and Jane Abeel Morton MD FABM

Mothers should feel empowered to hand express milk for their babies at anytime. Hand expression can change the outcome of a mom’s breastfeeding journey. Hand expression helps to stimulate milk supply, produces more milk than pumping alone, increases breastfeeding rates, and is an option for all mothers because it is free and requires no special equipment.¹ Hand expression gives mothers multiple options for providing breast milk to their children that does not rely on bottles and infant formula: spoon feeding, cup feeding, syringe and tube feeding, and finger feeding.

To learn more, join the movement to change the system for breastfeeding support. Visit the MIBFN website at: www.mibreastfeeding.org.

Flaherman, V. and Lee, H., “Breastfeeding by Feeding Expressed Mother’s Milk,” Pediatric Clinics of North America: Breastfeeding Updates for the Pediatrician 60 (2013): 227-246.



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