

# PUMP it UP

Lactating mamas, it's time to take note! Here, **SIMONE CASEY** reveals 10 top tips to mastering the fine art of expressing breastmilk

*Expressing and Storing Breastmilk* booklet (available from [www.mothersdirect.com.au](http://www.mothersdirect.com.au)) suggests a little olive oil on the cups to reduce friction, too. You can adjust the strength of the suction on most good electric pumps, so make sure this is high enough to give your breasts enough stimulation, but not so high that it hurts.

**4 BE LED BY BUB**  
So you've got the milk out, what next? For newborns, a small cup or the plunger of a syringe can help avoid nipple confusion, which sometimes comes with using bottles and teats. If you've decided to go with a bottle, be prepared to come across heaps of different shapes and teats. The ABA's Meredith Laverty suggests using "newborn teats even for older babies when you're combining using a bottle to feed expressed milk and breastfeeding, as the flow is closer to breastfeeding and it makes bub work for the milk." One way to make sure the milk doesn't squirt out too fast is to choose a bottle that doesn't easily leak milk when tipped upside-down.

**5 LEARN LET-DOWN TRIGGERS**  
The let-down reflex is a hormonal pathway between your breasts and your brain. When your nipple is stimulated by bub's sucking, the hormone oxytocin is released and acts upon the milk-making cells to push out the milk. So basically, you have to trick your brain into thinking your plastic pump is a baby. "The action of oxytocin can be blocked by hormones released when a mum feels embarrassed, stressed or otherwise tense," says Shona, who suggests deep breathing or other relaxation techniques when pumping. "Looking at a photo or video of your baby, listening to music, watching TV or visualising a relaxing scene are all great ways of assisting your let-down to happen." >

**1 GET HANDY**  
Although expressing isn't an essential part of breastfeeding success, studies still show that almost all breastfeeding mums in Australia express at some time before their bubs are six months old. Whether you're giving it a go on the odd occasion or making it an integral part of your feeding routine, achieve expressing success with these key bits of advice...

Particularly if you'll only be expressing a little, your own hand can do the trick when it comes to expressing breastmilk, no fancy equipment needed. Place your thumb on one side of your areola (a few centimetres back from the end of your nipple) and your first two fingers on the opposite side. Push back towards your chest wall to get a good grasp of the breast tissue, then roll your thumb and fingers towards the end of the nipple in a gentle, continuous motion. "Do this in a rhythm of about one per second, to mimic what a baby would do," advises lactation consultant Shona Cassels. It might take a minute or so before you trigger your let-down, which is the milk-ejection reflex, but it will happen. Shona's best tip? "Practise hand expressing

in the shower," she suggests. "The warm water helps with the flow of milk."

**2 PERSONALISE YOUR PUMP**  
Choosing a breast pump can be a bit overwhelming as there are so many types – hand pumps, battery powered pumps, electric ones, hospital-grade gear, single and double pumps – and lots of different brands, too. "Hand pumps are sufficient for occasional pumping, while battery or electric ones can help make pumping easier by decreasing the effort required from your hands," says Shona. If your bub is premature or you need to express long-term, it may be worth hiring an electric, hospital-grade pump from the Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA), a pharmacy or a baby store.

**3 KNOW YOUR SIZES AND SETTINGS**  
Nipples come in all shapes and sizes, and so do the cups on breast pumps. If your pump chafes your nipples or areola, chances are the cup (also known as the flange) is the wrong size, so have this checked by your midwife, maternal child health nurse or a lactation consultant. The ABA's

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## 6 DO YOUR MILK MATHS

Women's bodies are pretty clever, as breastmilk is designed to perfectly match your little as he grows.

"Recent research has shown the volume of milk produced does not change with your baby's age, rather it's the composition that changes to meet the needs of your baby," says Meredith. Every mum and bub is different, but the average volume consumed by a baby aged between one to six months is about 750 to 800ml over 24 hours. To work out how much to give your baby, just divide the total number of feeds by what your baby has in 24 hours. Let's assume you produce 800ml and your baby is having eight feeds. This means a single feed would work out to be 100ml. If bub is under a month old, multiply his weight in kilos by 150 and divide by the amount of feeds he has in 24 hours. For example,  $4\text{kg} \times 150 = 600\text{ml} \div 8 \text{ feeds} = 75\text{ml}$ .

## 7 MAXIMISE THE VOLUME

It's easy to get hung up on millilitres when you express, and nothing slows down production more than stressing as each drop falls into the bottle. But once you relax and get the hang of expressing, you may notice the duct openings spurting more readily at certain times of the day. Mornings are usually

*"Place a warm pack on the breast a few minutes before, to get the milk flowing"*

most productive after bub has a longer sleep overnight. Place a warm pack or wheat bag on the breast a few minutes before starting, to get the milk flowing. If you have access to a two-flange pump, "double pumping is

usually better for most mums as a woman's let-down is always triggered in both breasts at the same time," says Shona. Studies show that pumping two breasts at the same time means more milk and most definitely means it takes half the time – a win-win situation!

## 8 KEEP IT CLEAN

Washing pump parts and bottles can seem a real chore when you already have a bunch of baby-related cleaning to do, but the good news is that all the anti-infective properties of breastmilk mean you don't have to clean equipment as frequently as when using formula. "For your own use, your manual pump or milk collection kit should be rinsed in cold water between uses and stored in a closed container," says Meredith. "After six hours of use, your equipment should be thoroughly cleaned in hot water with dishwashing detergent, rinsed with hot water twice and the items left to dry on a clean towel." Store your pump parts and bottles in a covered container in between uses. Meredith also suggests popping pumping equipment in a saucepan to boil for five minutes once a week.

## 9 CHILL OUT

You can refrigerate or freeze your breastmilk in a bottle, but you can also use glass jars very carefully, plastic containers that don't go brittle when frozen or plastic bags with zip-lock closures, which can save space when frozen flat. "I like to suggest to mums to store their frozen milk in small portions which can be easily defrosted and reheated," says Meredith. "An ice-cube tray is a great way to access expressed milk for quick use." A few facts to remember are that freshly expressed breastmilk can last six to eight hours without refrigeration (below 26°C), no longer than 72 hours in the fridge, three months in a normal freezer (-18°C) and six to 12 months in a deep freeze (-20°C or lower). The easiest way to transport your milk is in an insulated container with an ice-brick. For more on this, check out the National Health and Medical Research Council's *Infant Feeding Guidelines* ([www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/n56](http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/n56)).

## 10 MAKE IT WORK

If you return to work before bub is well established on solid foods you may find you'll need to express your milk while you're there. Legally, the company you work for must allow you to take lactation breaks as well as provide facilities to either breastfeed your baby or express your milk. Tracey Kelly, national manager for the Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace program ([www.breastfeedingfriendly.com.au](http://www.breastfeedingfriendly.com.au)) encourages women to chat to their employers before they go back. "An employer often doesn't know what the breastfeeding employee needs in regards to support upon return to work and as women's needs can vary, it's vital for the employee to keep her employer or manager up to date." Most mums need a private area to express (not a toilet!), access to a fridge and flexibility to use break times to either feed or pump. The Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace website has a great *Breastfeeding & Work* fact sheet that includes a sample letter to pass on to your employer, or you may even like to register for the new Breastfeeding and Returning to Work Webinar. ★

The National Health and Medical Research Council recommends babies be exclusively breastfed until around six months of age and that breastfeeding is continued until 12 months of age and beyond, for as long as mum and child desire. While breastfeeding is the ideal way to nourish your baby, we recognise not all mums are able to do so. If you have any concerns about your breastfed or bottle-fed baby, make an appointment with your child health nurse or GP.