

HELPFUL HINTS: For starting and keeping up your milk supply when your baby is not breastfeeding.

After birth some babies do not or cannot breastfeed.

Here are some steps to take to help start and keep up your milk supply when your baby is not breastfeeding.

- ▶ Start to express your breasts by hand as soon as possible after birth. Try to do this in the first 6 hours. Hand expression often works best during the first 24 hours.
- ▶ By 24 hours after birth, combine hand expression and pumping. Use “hands on pumping” which means using your hands and the electric pump together. More information on “hands on pumping” can be found in the pamphlet *“Breast Massage, Expression and ‘Hands on’ Pumping of Mother’s milk”*.
- ▶ Express your breasts about 8 times or more in 24 hours, This means at least every 3 hours during the day and at least once at night.
- ▶ At the beginning you may not get any of the first milk. This perfect first milk is called colostrum. By expressing/pumping far more often in 24 hours you will increase your milk supply. Even the smallest amount of colostrum can be saved for your baby. Ask your nurse to help you use a syringe to collect drops of colostrum on your nipple or spoon if your baby is in your room. Milk for use in the NICU needs to be stored in a capped labelled syringe or bottle.
- ▶ When you are pumping one breast at a time, you use single pump parts. Pump each breast for 5 minutes. Switch back and forth for a total of about 20 minutes. Use breast massage and compression while pumping.
- ▶ When you are pumping both breasts at the same time you use double pump parts. Pump for about 10 to 15 minutes. Pump longer if milk flow continues. Use breast massage and compression while pumping.
- ▶ Once milk is flowing, pump a few more minutes after the flow stops.
- ▶ Start at the lowest suction. Increase the suction slowly over time. Pumping should be comfortable. If your nipples are tender, keep the suction low, switch from breast to breast sooner and put a small amount of lubricant on the inside of the funnel where your nipple slides in and out.
- ▶ Lean forward so the milk goes into the bottle.
- ▶ It may be helpful to support your breast by cupping it in your hand while you pump.
- ▶ **To help your milk flow, try:**
 - holding your baby(ies) skin-to-skin as soon as possible and expressing/pumping right after
 - heat. Apply warm compresses to your breasts before and while you express/pump
 - massaging your breasts before you begin expressing/pumping and off and on when you are pumping
 - gently rubbing the nipple on one breast while you express/pump the other
 - expressing/pumping in a comfortable place or expressing/pumping at your baby’s bedside

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- sitting down and putting your feet up for five minutes before beginning to express/pump
- relaxing your arms and back and taking several slow deep breaths
- looking at a picture of your baby or babies while expressing/pumping
- listening to a relaxation tape
- listening to music, reading or thinking happy thoughts while expressing/pumping
- listening to a tape of your baby's sounds
- putting one of your baby's blankets over your arm on the side you are pumping. Think of the heaviness of your baby against your arm, the softness of his/her skin, etc.
- drinking a glass of fluid

You may find that your milk supply decreases if you are pumping over a long period of time such as 2 to 3 weeks or longer. Ask for help. If you have extra 100 ounces or more, consider donating it to the BC Women's Milk Bank. Call Children's & Women's Lactation Services at 604-875-2282.

It's good to ask!

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