

Hands-on Pumping



Have you ever noticed the hands of the baby when you are nursing? Perhaps you tend to push them out of the way. But your baby's hands on your breasts are actually very useful. Their gentle touch and movement on your breasts stimulate your breasts and aid milk production and milk flow. Likewise, when using a pump to express milk, you might think that the pump should do all of the milk-removal work. However, using your hands before, during and after pumping (also called "hands-on pumping"), can make a big difference; You may remove as much as double the amount of milk. So, how does it work? Below a step-to-step guide to hands-on pumping.

Guide to Hands-on Pumping:

1. Ask if someone can help you massage your breasts whilst you pump. It is most comfortable for this person to sit or stand behind you.
2. If you don't have someone to help you, wear an expression bra or bustier that will hold the flanges in place while you pump, so that your hands will be free for massage. You can buy an expression bra, but you can also cut holes in a sports bra or bustier.
3. Start with slow and gentle breast massage to stimulate let-down.
4. Apply the breast pump and use maximum suction level that is comfortable, not painful. Double pumping (pumping both breasts at the same time) is most effective.
5. Compress and/or massage your breasts while pumping. Feel for areas of firmness and watch the sprays of milk and adjust hand position to where milk flows most easily.
6. When milk flow slows to a trickle, stop pumping and massage your breasts again, concentrating on areas that feel full.
7. To help obtain the rich in fat hind milk and express even more milk, finish pumping in a way that works best for you:
 - a. Switch to single pumping so you can be more vigorous with the massage. Be vigorous, but gentle. Breast tissue is very delicate, don't damage it. Massaging your breasts shouldn't hurt. And/or
 - b. Use hand expression to empty the breasts. Some mothers double their output this way.



With hand expression and/or single pumping, go back and forth from one breast to the other. Pay particular attention to the outside margins of your breasts. This entire routine takes about 25 minutes.

Watch this video about hands-on pumping: <https://med.stanford.edu/newborns/professional-education/breastfeeding/maximizing-milk-production.html>.

Read handouts "Selecting a Breast Pump", "Expressing Breast Milk", and "Increasing Breast Milk Supply" for more information about selecting the right pump, how to use the pump correctly and effectively, and other tricks and tips to help increase breast milk supply.

Please be aware that the information provided is intended solely for general educational and informational purposes only. It is neither intended nor implied to be a substitute for professional medical advice. Always seek the advice of your physician for any questions you may have regarding your medical condition. Never disregard professional medical advice or delay in seeking it because of something you have received in this program.

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