

Pumping & Maintaining Your Milk Production

The best way to make sure your body is making as much milk as possible is to feed your baby every time they show hunger cues. For many people, this ensures they have enough milk to meet their baby's nutritional needs.

If you have had chest or breast surgery, are co-feeding or inducing lactation, or have a baby with sucking challenges (such as a preterm baby), you may need to add hand expression and pumping to your feeding routine to establish and maintain your milk production.

Pumping or hand expression?

- If you want to establish or increase your milk production, it is recommended to use a double electric pump to maximize the amount of milk produced.
- Hand expressing for a few minutes before and after pumping may increase the amount of milk expressed.
- Pumping should be comfortable. There are many different flange types (in hard plastic and soft silicone) and fits that can increase your pumping comfort and effectiveness. If needed, a lactation consultant can help you find the best fit.
- Some people might prefer not to use an electric pump, and will express milk with a hand pump, passive milk collector, and/or by hand expression only.
- If you are only separated from your baby for short periods of time, hand expression may be enough to keep you comfortable and maintain your milk production.

Pumping

Full pumping session

A full pumping session replaces a bodyfeeding session with your baby. The goal is to drain milk from both sides to signal your body to make milk for the next feeding or pumping session. **A full pumping session lasts 15–30 minutes.** It is not recommended to extend beyond 30 minutes or to attempt to pump until your chest or breasts are 'empty.'

Supplementary pumping session

Supplemental pumping is pumping you do after you bodyfeed your baby. The goal is to stimulate more milk production, protect your existing supply, and/or collect milk to feed your baby. **A supplementary pumping session lasts 5–15 minutes.**

Reason for pumping

Type of pumping session & frequency

Your baby is not regularly feeding from your body.*



Do a full pumping session every three hours or eight times in 24 hours (see **overnight pumping** below). Some people pump every three hours, and some are more flexible with pumping intervals to allow for sleep breaks, caring for other children, work, and other responsibilities.

Your baby is not feeding effectively from your body.



Do a supplementary pumping session after every bodyfeed. If this is not manageable, pump after at least every other bodyfeed.

You want to increase your milk production.



Do a supplementary pumping session after some or all bodyfeeding sessions. If not pumping after every feeding session, pump after the same feeding(s) every day to avoid engorgement or overproduction.

You are temporarily separated from your baby due to illness, work needs, sleep breaks, or other reasons.



Do a full pumping session at the time that your baby would feed or at the soonest opportunity. Repeat if separated for more than one feeding.

** Examples include: lactation induction before baby arrives, baby is too sick or premature to bodyfeed, co-feeding, or the choice to pump without bodyfeeding.*

Overnight pumping

Milk making hormones are at their highest overnight and most people need to pump or feed at least once during the night to support optimal milk production. People may choose not to pump overnight to protect their sleep and their physical and mental health. See **Personalize your routine** below.

To help with milk removal, try the following before feeding or expressing milk:

- Get comfortable and relaxed.
- Have water within arms reach to stay hydrated.
- Have a snack within arms reach that you can eat with one hand.
- Gentle heat or massage can help milk flow, if needed.



Personalize your routine

Any amount of your milk you give your baby is beneficial and only you can decide what feeding and pumping routine is right for you.

Pumping eight times a day will impact your sleep, your ability to leave your house without planning, and the time available to care for yourself and your family. Some people can make this work and some are unable to maintain this frequency. This does not reflect on your commitment to parenting or providing your baby with human milk.

Once milk production is established (which happens two to four weeks after birth for someone who was pregnant), some people can maintain milk production with fewer feedings or pumping sessions. Other people need to continue to remove milk every three hours to maintain their milk production.

Bodies are diverse with how they make milk, and what works for one person may not work for another. Take note of the routine that feels comfortable and allows you to sustain milk production. If you need more support or advice, speak with your care provider.



When to seek support from your care team

- Your milk production seems to be decreasing or is taking longer than expected to increase (judged by baby's hunger cues, the need for supplemental milk, and your pumping output).
- Your baby's latch hurts your body. Latching should not be uncomfortable.
- Your pump hurts your body. Pumping should not be uncomfortable.
- Your pump does not seem to effectively remove milk from your body. There are many adjustments that you can make to improve your response to the pump, including changing the type and/or size of flange, trying a different type of pump, and adjusting your pumping techniques.
- Your feeding routine is negatively affecting your mental health or baseline sleep needs. There are many ways to adjust feeding routines to continue pumping or bodyfeeding while also meeting your self-care needs. Addressing your well-being or concerns sooner rather than later can preserve both your health as a parent and your feeding relationship with your baby.

For more information, visit transcarebc.ca

This document is designed for informational purposes only and should not be taken as medical advice. Please discuss any ongoing questions or concerns with your health care team.

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