

After reading this lesson, click the survey link at the end to answer a few questions and receive nutrition education credit for your class.

Hand Expression



What is Hand-expressing breastmilk?

Hand-expressing breast milk is a natural and nurturing technique that uses the hands to massage and compress the breast to remove breast milk. It's a way for mothers to connect with their bodies and provide the best nourishment for their babies.

Sometimes breastfeeding can be a challenge, especially for first-time nursing mothers. However, there is a technique that can empower every mother to take control of their breastfeeding journey.

Hand expression, a method more effective than using a breast pump for many women, can be a game-changer. Whether a mother does not have access to an electric breast pump or simply wants to make more breastmilk, the power is in her hands to express breastmilk efficiently.



When is expressed breast milk helpful?

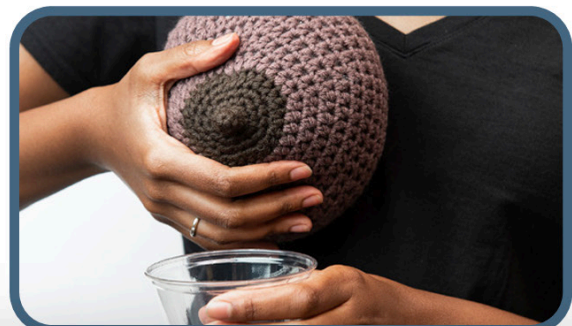
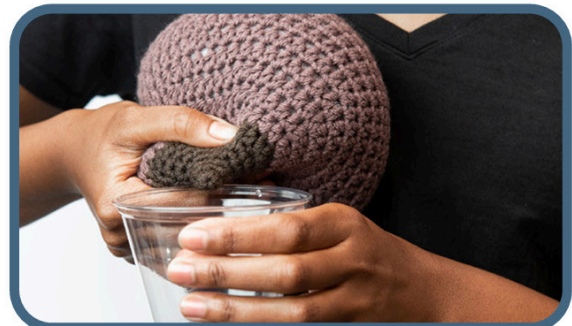
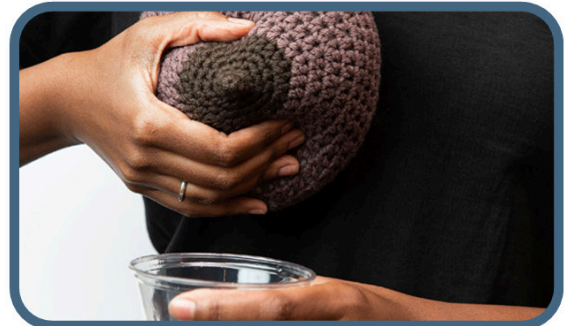
- To empty the milk from the breast regularly to keep the breast from becoming engorged, especially if a mother's breast feels extra full.
- To increase the volume of breast milk: Studies have shown that a combination of pumping breast milk and then hand-expressing breastmilk after pumping has been correlated to a higher supply of breastmilk and milk with higher caloric content.
- If sometimes the baby latches and is not good at sucking or extracting the milk from the breast, hand-expressing breastmilk can increase the flow allowing them to transfer more milk.
- To invite the baby to latch, especially if the baby is not nursing well. Hand-expressing a little bit of 'colostrum,' which is the earliest form of breastmilk a mother produces during pregnancy and is highly nutritious on the breast before baby latching, can sometimes entice them to the breast. When a nursing parent is producing small volumes of colostrum and the baby is not latching well or can't latch early on, hand-expression can be easier and more effective than pumping.
- When an electric pump is limited or unavailable, for example, if a mother forgets her electric pump, during a power outage or natural disaster.
- When a mother is weaning her infant/toddler from breastfeeding, she wants to empty the breast enough to release the discomfort.

How to get Started

Remember that the expression of milk gets easier the more you try it. You may get only a few drops initially, which is okay! This skill will become more accessible in time, and a more significant amount of breastmilk will be expressed. The amount of milk expressed depends on many factors and does not tell you how much milk your baby receives from the breast.

Steps on Hand-Expression

1. Find a place where you are comfortable.
2. Wash your hands and nails with soap and water. (You might even take a warm shower just before expressing, this can help the milk to let down).
3. Massage your breasts slowly, starting at the outer areas and working your way down towards the nipple. It is okay to gently shake or move your breast. The massage should be moderate and never uncomfortable to your breast or skin.
4. Place a clean cup or jar beneath the nipple so the milk drips directly into it without touching your Hand or your breast. If you are collecting colostrum, collecting the drops by placing a spoon tip into the baby's mouth or collecting with a dropper is convenient.
5. Position your finger in the areola with the thumb about one inch behind the nipple and your fingers below, forming a "C."
6. Push your hand back toward your chest, then roll your thumb and finger forward and release with a rhythmic motion until the milk flows or squirts out.
7. Move your hand around your breast, compress fingers towards each other, and rotate your thumb and finger around the areola to get milk from several positions. You may want to try using both hands on each breast.
8. Avoid squeezing the nipple or sliding down the breast since this can cause bruising.



Remember,

When you learn any new skills, it may take ‘practice to learn your rhythm’, which means finding the most effective and comfortable way for you to hand-express milk.

Hand-expression may take five to 10 minutes for some moms, or 20 to 30 minutes for others. Both are normal.

Express milk until the flow slows down, then move to the other breast. You can repeat the process, switching from breast to breast as you change your hand position.

Video - The Basics of Breast Massage and Hand Expression

Storing expressed breastmilk

Counter Top or Table



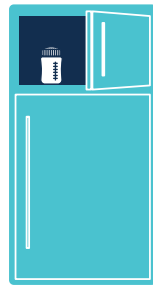
Room temp. (77°F or colder)
UP TO 4 HOURS

Refrigerator



40°F or colder *
UP TO 4 DAYS

Freezer with separate door



0°F or colder **
UP TO 6 MONTH

Complete the questions below to receive credit for this lesson

Questions:

- True or False:** Hand expression is a natural technique that uses hands to massage and compress the breast to remove breastmilk.
- True or False:** Two events correlated with hand expression are : higher supply of breastmilk and higher caloric content of the expressed breastmilk.
- True or False:** Hand expression can be easier and more effective than pumping.
- True or False:** Hand expression can be simplified in three steps:
 - Gentle push with finger back towards the chest,
 - Compress fingers towards each other
 - Release fingers.)

Key: 1) True 2) True 3) True 4) True

References:

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- Resources. Oklahoma Breastfeeding Resource Center. (n.d.). [https://obrc.ouhsc.edu/Resources/Patient-Handouts-Services-PCH-NS-8100, N. \(n.d.\). WIC certifier competency training and Tools. Washington State Department of Health. https://doh.wa.gov/public-health-provider-resources/public-health-system-resources-and-services/local-health-resources-and-tools/wic/training/wic-certifier-competency](https://obrc.ouhsc.edu/Resources/Patient-Handouts-Services-PCH-NS-8100_N_(n.d.)_WIC_certifier_competency_training_and_Tools_Washington_State_Department_of_Health._https://doh.wa.gov/public-health-provider-resources/public-health-system-resources-and-services/local-health-resources-and-tools/wic/training/wic-certifier-competency)
- Storing and thawing breast milk. WIC Breastfeeding Support - U.S. Department of Agriculture. (n.d.). <https://wicbreastfeeding.fns.usda.gov/storing-and-thawing-breast-milk>

Congratulations, you have finished!

Have more questions? Contact your local WIC nutritionist!



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