

Breast pumping and human milk storage



Why do I need to pump my breasts?

Human milk contains many factors that can help protect your baby. Pumping your breasts can help:

- Create and keep up your milk supply when your baby is not able to breastfeed.
- Increase your milk supply even if your baby is breastfeeding.

What else do I need to know?

During the first few days after your baby's birth, do not expect more than a few drops of milk. Your milk supply will increase when you pump regularly.

- Express your milk by hand or use a small electric pump if you only need to express your milk for a few feedings or only once in a while.
- Use a hospital or rental grade pump if you need to express your milk for a longer time.

How do I prepare to pump?

- Wash your hands well with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- You do not need to wash your breasts before pumping. Washing your breasts when you shower each day is all you need.

What supplies do I need?

Your baby's nurse or lactation consultant can give you the supplies that you will need to pump in the hospital. Supplies most often include:

- Breast pump kit, which includes a pink basin for cleaning pump parts
- Collection bottles and storage bottles
- Labels (white, preprinted barcode labels)
- Zip-top plastic bags (also called Ziploc bags)
- Dish soap for washing pump parts
- Steam sanitation bag

How do I pump?

Follow these guidelines to pump your breasts. Ask a nurse if you have any questions or problems.

- Start on the lowest suction setting, and increase to your comfort level little by little.
- Try not to focus on the containers as they fill. Instead, close your eyes, breathe deeply and relax. You may also find it helpful to watch TV, read or listen to music.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.

Breast pumping and human milk storage, continued

How long do I pump?

You can:

- Double pump both breasts at the same time for 15 to 20 minutes.
- Pump 1 breast at a time instead (if you cannot double pump). Be sure to adjust the pump for single side pumping. Pump each breast for 15 to 20 minutes.

How often do I pump?

The more often you pump, the more milk you will make.

- If you have a newborn, pump every 2 to 3 hours, including overnight.
- If you have an older baby, pump as often as your baby would be breastfeeding.

How much should I pump?

You should pump:

- 16 ounces or more a day by the end of the first week.
- 25 ounces or more a day by the end of the second week.

Once you can pump 25 to 30 ounces a day, you may be able to cut back on pumping and still keep up your milk supply.

How do I label my milk in the hospital?

Your baby's nurse will give you labels for your milk.

- Make sure it is your baby's name on the label sheet.
- Write your initials in the top right corner of the label sheet. This is to show that you agree the labels belong to your baby.

After pumping:

- Use a label from the label sheet to fill in the date and time of your pump session.
- Transfer your milk from the collection bottle into a storage bottle. Close the storage bottle tightly.
- Stick a dated and timed label onto each storage bottle. Place all storage bottles into a zip-top plastic bag.
- Give the bag to your baby's nurse. Let them know if the milk needs to go in the freezer or refrigerator.

NOTE: When using stored human milk to feed your baby, check the label on the container to make sure it matches your baby's wrist ID before feeding.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.

Breast pumping and human milk storage, continued

How do I clean the equipment?

The care team will show you how to clean the equipment. Some guidelines include:

- After each pumping session:
 - Place all pump parts except the tubing in the basin the care team gives you. Rinse pump parts with cool water. Do not soak pump parts in water.
 - Take apart and wash all pump parts **except the tubing** with hot, soapy water in a basin or dishpan used only for washing pump parts or infant feeding items. Rinse well.
 - Let them dry on clean paper towels in the basin. Cover with clean paper towels.
- Sanitize pump parts at least 1 time each day. You can sanitize with a steam sanitization bag, by boiling, or by washing them on the top rack of your dishwasher at home.
- Ask your baby’s nurse for the teaching sheet “Keeping Your Breast Pump Clean” for more information.

How should I store the collected human milk?

- If your baby will drink your milk **within 4 hours**, you may keep the milk at your baby’s bedside.
- If it will be **more than 4 hours** before your baby drinks your milk, give it to the nurse to refrigerate **right away**. Fresh milk is good in the refrigerator for 4 days.
- If your baby is **not** going to drink your milk within 4 days, give it to your nurse to freeze **right away**.

Other storage tips:

- Do not pour fresh milk into a container that already has frozen milk in it.
- Do not refreeze milk that has been thawed.
- If your baby takes small feedings, freeze your milk in small amounts (1 ounce or less).
- We have refrigerators and freezers for human milk storage in the hospital. Talk with your baby’s nurse about storing your milk.
- Take all stored milk with you when your baby goes home. Any milk left after discharge will be discarded.
- When available, always use fresh milk first.

How should I bring collected human milk to the hospital?

- Place your milk in clean glass or plastic bottles or containers with solid lids. Label each container of milk correctly. Place it in a labeled zip-top plastic bag.
- To bring **fresh** or **thawed** human milk to your baby, place the containers on ice or use frozen gel packs.
- To bring **frozen** human milk to your baby, pack the containers tightly in a cooler **without ice** to carry it to the hospital.
 - Do not use ice with frozen milk as it can cause the milk to thaw. Use frozen gel packs instead.
 - Use clean towels, newspaper or Styrofoam beads to fill any extra space in the cooler.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.

Breast pumping and human milk storage, continued

- Pack any frozen milk that must be shipped and will be out of the freezer more than 18 hours in dry ice. Use a sturdy insulated container for shipping.

What type of pump should I use?

Pumps in the hospital

Use the pumps we have in the hospital while your baby is here.

- The care team will give you a kit to use with the pump.
- We use Ameda brand pumps. The kits we provide will also work on a rental Ameda pump and many other home breast pumps.

Pumps at home

You may need to rent a pump to use at home.

- The 2 biggest breast pump companies are **Ameda** and **Medela**. You will need a Medela kit if you rent a Medela pump. If you do not already have a kit, you will need to buy one.
- If you have WIC, check with the WIC office to see if you can borrow a hospital grade pump.
- Check with your health insurance company to find out if you need to use a specific type of pump or provider. The care team can provide a letter showing that you need one.

Where can I find more information on breast pumps?

You may visit these websites for more information:

- U.S. Food and Drug Administration – [fda.gov/medical-devices/consumer-products/breast-pumps](https://www.fda.gov/medical-devices/consumer-products/breast-pumps)
- Office on Women’s Health – [womenshealth.gov/breastfeeding/pumping-and-storing-breastmilk](https://www.womenshealth.gov/breastfeeding/pumping-and-storing-breastmilk)

Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta has not reviewed all of the sites listed as resources and does not make any representations regarding their content or accuracy. Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta does not recommend or endorse any particular products, services or the content or use of any third party websites, or make any determination that such products, services or websites are necessary or appropriate for you or for the use in rendering care to patients. Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta is not responsible for the content of any of the above-referenced sites or any sites linked to these Sites. Use of the links provided on this or other sites is at your sole risk.

This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child’s doctor or a member of your child’s healthcare team about specific care of your child.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.