



Breastfeeding Your Baby

IN THE NEONATAL INTENSIVE CARE UNIT

A Supplement to *Breastfeeding with Success*

Human Milk for Human Babies

When your baby is in the special care nursery (neonatal intensive care unit, or NICU), making milk is something **only you** can do. Your breast milk will give your baby the best nutrition possible. Your Kaiser Permanente lactation consultants, nurses, and physicians are there to help.

Valuable general information on breastfeeding can be found in the Kaiser Permanente *Breastfeeding with Success* booklet.

Breast milk is like medicine for all newborns in the NICU. Breast milk is perfect for both premature and full-term babies.

Babies fed their mother's milk have:

- Better brain development (higher IQ)
- Better health with fewer and less-serious infections
- Lower risk of life-threatening infections
- Lower risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), also known as crib death
- Fewer eye problems that premature babies are more likely to have
- Fewer feeding problems
- Improved digestion and absorption of nutrients (food), especially during the first two weeks when feedings are started
- Lower rate of chronic lung disease

Breast milk made right after giving birth is called *colostrum*. It has:

- 600 nutrients that no artificial formula can compare with
- Fats that help with brain growth
- Fats, sugars, and proteins to help the baby grow strong and healthy
- Hormones that teach the baby's intestines to digest food
- Antibodies and live cells to prevent and fight infections

Keys to Breastfeeding with Success

Hand Expression

**Hand Expression + Hospital-Grade Breast Pump
= More Milk**

Expressing milk by hand raises hormone levels. It also helps to maintain milk production using breast massage and compression. Early hand expression helps to increase later milk production.

To watch a video to learn how to hand express your breast milk, visit this website:
[newborns.stanford.edu/Breastfeeding/
HandExpression.html](http://newborns.stanford.edu/Breastfeeding/HandExpression.html)

Guidelines

1. **Place your fingers and thumb** either at the edge of your areola or 1 inch beyond the edge in a “C” shape. As you learn to express your milk you will find the spots where the milk comes out the easiest.
2. **Press** back toward your chest.
3. **Compress** your fingers and thumb together through the breast. Avoid sliding down toward the nipple.
4. **Release** the pressure and start over again.
5. Go back and forth from one breast to the other. **Press. Compress. Release.**
6. At first you may only see drops of colostrum, but as your mature milk comes in you will start to see sprays of milk.
7. Hand expression is a skill that takes practice. The more you hand express, the easier it will become.

Pump Early, Pump Often, and Pump Well



Pump Early

- **The most important time to start a good milk supply is during the first 2 weeks after giving birth.**
- Start pumping as soon as possible. We recommend that you start pumping **within 1 to 3 hours of giving birth.**
- For the first few days, your breasts make a very small amount of colostrum, which is thick and sticky and yellow to orange in color. When your milk changes to mature milk at 2 to 5 days, you should see long, thin sprays of thinner white or bluish milk.
- Hold your baby **skin to skin** as often as possible. This close contact will soothe your baby. He or she will learn to feed faster and it will increase your milk supply.
- If your baby is premature, you may make more milk than your baby needs.

Pump Often

- Your breasts operate on a **demand and supply** principle. The more milk is **demand**ed by breastfeeding or pumping, the more milk **supply** you will have. The less often you breast-feed or pump, the less milk you will make.
- At first, you will express drops of milk. This is normal.
- **Removing small amounts of colostrum regularly will stimulate your milk production.**
- In the beginning, it is best to pump 8 to 10 times every 24 hours. Pumping on schedule will help to start and increase your milk supply.
- Pump at least once during the night. Do not go longer than 4 hours at night without pumping.
- It takes 3 to 5 days of consistent pumping to be able to make 2 ounces or more each time.
- From your baby's birth to 4 days of age, pump each breast for 10 to 15 minutes. Your milk supply will increase a lot by days 3 to 5.
- From days 4 to 10, pump longer—until 2 minutes after the last milk drops or for 20 minutes.
- Your goal is to express 2 to 3 ounces each time or 25 to 30 ounces daily by day 10.
- When you are making 20 to 25 ounces per day, you may be able to decrease sessions to 6 to 8 times per day.
- It is normal if one of your breasts makes more milk than the other.

Pump Well

- You can use a hospital-grade breast pump when you are separated from your baby or when the baby is not able to breastfeed. You can use the breast pumps in the NICU and rent one to use at home.
- Your lactation consultant or nurse will check your health plan for breast pump coverage. If it is not covered, you may still buy or rent a pump.
- Pumping both sides at the same time (double pumping) will help you make more milk and save time.
- In general, do not use nipple lubricants.
- Center your nipple in the breast shield tunnel, where it should move freely. It is important to

have a good fit. If it is too tight, it may hurt your nipple. Most women fit the standard size.

- Some women may need a larger breast shield. Your nurse or lactation consultant can help you with the correct size.
- Start the pump on a low level of suction and increase slowly to find a comfortable level.
- Pumping should not hurt. If it hurts, turn the pump down a little.

Getting Ready to Pump

1. Wash your hands. Do not wash your breasts. A daily shower is plenty. Do not use soap on your nipples; it will dry them out.
2. Place a warm, moist cloth on your breasts for about 5 to 10 minutes before pumping. This will help your milk ducts relax and help the milk flow better. After using the warm compress, massage your breasts for 1 to 2 minutes. Start from the largest part of the breast and work all around it, moving toward the nipple.
3. Have a picture of your baby in front of you. Take a deep breath and imagine happy times together.
4. Get comfortable, relax, and think about your baby. **Learning to pump takes practice.** The milk will come.

Remember to clean the breast pump parts after every use. Take the kit apart and wash all parts that touch breast milk in hot soapy water. Rinse well. Air dry on a clean surface. See the Kaiser Permanente *Breast Pump Cleaning and Care Instructions* handout for more information.

Getting the Best Milk Supply

- Massaging your breasts during pumping may increase your milk supply.
- Hand expression before, during, and after pumping will increase your milk.
- Your lactation consultant may recommend supplements to help you make more milk.

- Foods that may increase milk supply:
 - High-fiber foods and grains such as oats (not instant), barley, brown rice, quinoa, and beans
 - Calcium-rich foods such as sesame, almonds, and dark-green leafy vegetables
 - Fruits such as apricots, dates, figs, and cooked green papaya

To watch a video about hands-on pumping, visit this website: newborns.stanford.edu/Breastfeeding/MaxProduction.html

Tip: You may want to buy a pumping bra that holds the breast shield in place so your hands are free to massage and compress or to just pump “hands free.”

Storing Your Milk While Your Baby Is in the Hospital

- Use only new bottles and labels provided by Kaiser Permanente. Your baby may not be able to have the milk if you use other types of containers.
- Put enough milk in each bottle for one feeding.
- Combine milk from the left and right pump bottles, if needed.
- Fill the bottle no more than $\frac{2}{3}$ full (milk expands when frozen).
- Refrigerate or freeze milk within 2 hours after pumping.
- If your baby was born at less than 32 weeks' gestation, freeze all of your breast milk for at least 2 days to kill viruses. Infants born at 32 weeks or less must be fed breast milk that has been frozen and thawed.
- Your baby's nurse will tell you how to freeze your breast milk and transport it to the hospital.



Photo: Thermo Fisher Scientific

See the **Breast Milk Storage Guidelines** section of the Kaiser Permanente *Breastfeeding with Success* booklet.

Breast Pumping Log

Mothers who keep track of their pumping make more milk.

Mother's Name: _____ **Baby's Name:** _____

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