

Breastfeeding: *Pumping milk for your baby in the NICU*

How often do I need to pump?

Pump as often as your baby would normally breastfeed—about every 2 to 3 hours during the day. At night, you can wait a little longer between sessions, so you can get more sleep.

A recommended schedule is to pump 7 times during the day and once in the middle of the night.

How long do I need to pump?

Pump for 10 to 20 minutes on each breast (if you're using a double pump, this is faster). Here's an example:

Pumping schedule example

6am 9am 11am 2pm 5pm 8pm 10pm 3am

Many mothers find that setting exact times for pumping and staying on that schedule makes pumping easier. **But a strict schedule isn't necessary.**

How can I keep track?

To help you keep track of when you pumped and how much milk you produced, use a pumping record or breastfeeding app on your phone.

Which type of pump should I use?

When you're visiting your baby in the NICU, use one of the electric pumps reserved for visiting moms. Your baby's nurse can show you to a pumping room. At home, it's best to use a similar, hospital-grade pump. This type of pump has appropriate suction settings and can pump both breasts at the same time.

Buy or rent a pump. (If you already have an electric pump, ask the consultant if it's adequate.) When you get the pump and the pump kit, have your lactation consultant check the fit of your breasts to the **flanges** [FLANJ-ees]. (The flanges are the plastic funnels that come with the tubing in the pump kit.)

If you're worried about the cost of renting a pump:

- **Some insurance companies will cover the rental cost.** If you're on Medicaid and signed up with WIC (Women, Infants, and Children—a government nutrition program), you can get a pump from your local WIC office.
- **The cost of buying or renting a good pump is less than the cost of formula.**



What do I need to do?

- 1 **Buy or rent a breast pump.** Your lactation consultant can recommend a pump.
- 2 **Set a pumping schedule.** Try to pump 8 times in 24 hours and to completely empty your breasts.
- 3 **Take care of yourself.**
 - **Eat at least 3 balanced meals and 2 healthy protein snacks every day.** Get help preparing food and snacks.
 - **Drink 6 to 8 full glasses of water each day (or at least enough so that you don't feel thirsty).**
 - **Keep taking your prenatal vitamin.**
 - **Sleep and rest well.** Go to bed early, and take naps during the day. (Turn off your phone!) Ask for help with daily tasks.
- 4 **Talk to your lactation consultant if you have any concerns.**

What can I expect as I begin?

When you first start pumping, you may not get much milk—perhaps only a few drops at a time. But stick to your pumping schedule. Your milk supply will gradually increase. The more you pump or breastfeed, the more milk you'll produce. Use a pumping log to write down when you pump and how much milk you pump each time.

TIP: Think let-down, not suction.

Effective pumping is more about the let-down (the body's release of milk) than it is about the sucking action of the pump. To help trigger let-down, try to:

- **Focus your thoughts and emotions on your baby.** Think of your baby, smell an item of their clothing, listen to a recording of her cooing or crying, or look at their picture. Try to set aside stress and frustration. Relax and feel good about the healthy milk you're creating for your new baby.
- **Stimulate your breasts.** Take a warm shower before you pump, or place warm compresses on your breasts. Gently massage your breasts for a few minutes before pumping.

How do I clean the pump kit?

When you buy or rent a breast pump, you'll get a pump kit with it. The kit includes the collection bottles, the flanges, and the tubing that connects the flanges to the pump machine. Clean your kit according to these instructions:

- **After every pumping session, wash the flanges and bottles with hot soapy water.** (Don't get the tubing wet. You only need to wash the flanges and bottles, not the tubing.)
- **Once a day, sanitize the flanges and bottles.** You can do this in several different ways:
 - **In the dishwasher.**
 - **By boiling the parts for 20 minutes in a pot of water.** If you have hard water, add 1 to 2 tablespoons of white vinegar to prevent mineral deposits from building up on the kit.
 - **In a Medela Quick Clean Microsteam Bag.** You can buy this online or at a lactation supply store.

How do I store my milk?

Store your milk in the plastic containers provided by the hospital. You can use these when you pump at the hospital and at home (take some containers home with you).

- **Always label the container.** Write the date and time you pumped on a pre-printed hospital I.D. label with your baby's name and medical number.
- **Don't mix milk from different pumping sessions.** Never add freshly pumped milk to milk that is already in your refrigerator or freezer. Store milk from each pumping separately.
- **Refrigerate or freeze the milk immediately after pumping.** If your baby will take the milk within 2 days, refrigerate it. If not, put the milk in the back of your freezer, not in the door. Frozen milk can be kept for 3 months in a regular freezer and for 6 months in a deep freeze.

How do I transport the milk?

Follow these steps:

- **For refrigerated milk.** Keep the milk cool by packing it in a cooler with ice.
- **For frozen milk.** Put the frozen containers in a cooler, but do NOT pack the cooler with ice. (Believe it or not, ice will actually speed up the thawing of frozen milk.) Instead, fill the cooler's empty spaces with a towel or with styrofoam beads. **Note: Once frozen milk thaws, you need to use it within a day.**

Breast milk safety

To make sure that your milk is given only to your baby, containers of breast milk are carefully checked. Checks are done by hospital staff or by you, and they involve verifying your baby's name and hospital number at each of these times:

- When your milk is brought onto the unit.
- As breast milk is being prepared to be fed to your baby (only give your baby milk that has been checked).
- Before you take your milk home.

Your participation in these checks helps prevent errors in handling and feeding of breast milk.

Intermountain Healthcare complies with applicable federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex. Se proveen servicios de interpretación gratis. Hable con un empleado para solicitarlo. 我們將根據您的需求提供免費的口譯服務。請找尋工作人員協助。

© 2010-2018 Intermountain Healthcare. All rights reserved. The content presented here is for your information only. It is not a substitute for professional medical advice, and it should not be used to diagnose or treat a health problem or disease. Please consult your healthcare provider if you have any questions or concerns. More health information is available at intermountainhealthcare.org. Patient and Provider Publications FS142-03/18 (Last reviewed -06/17) Also available in Spanish.