

Making the Most of Your Breast Pump

QUESTION: How should I prepare to pump?

ANSWER: First, read your breast pump instructions. Wash your hands well. Find a place to sit where you can relax that supports your back and shoulders.

Center the breast flanges over your nipples. Press them lightly against your breasts to make an air seal. Then start your pump. If you are pumping with a dual milk collection kit, see the photo of dual pumping with one hand. By holding the flanges this way, you will have a hand free to start your pump.

QUESTION: How can I get the most milk with my pump?

ANSWER: First, the strongest pump suction does not always pump more milk. Set your pump at the highest suction that feels good...and no higher. Pumping should not hurt.

Pumping milk is not like sucking a drink through a straw. With a straw, the stronger you suck, the more you get. When pumping, most milk comes only when a let-down, or milk release, happens. Without a milk release, most milk stays in the breast. What is a milk release?

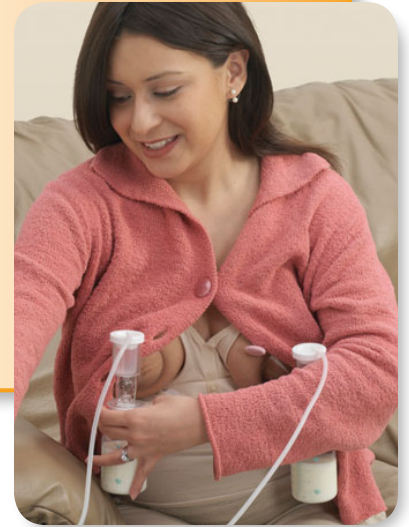
- Hormones cause muscles in the breast to squeeze and milk ducts to widen, pushing the milk out.
- Some mothers feel tingling. Others feel nothing.

A milk release can happen with a touch at the breast, hearing a baby cry, or even by thinking about your baby. Pain or feelings of stress, anger, and upset can block milk release.

While breastfeeding, most mothers have three or four milk releases without knowing it. **To get more milk with your pump, you need more milk releases.** But you may need some help at first until your body learns to respond to your pump like a baby.

To trigger more milk releases, you can use your mind and senses. One or two senses may work better than the others, so try them all to find out which work best for you.

Mothers pump for many reasons: to relieve breast fullness in the early weeks, to boost milk production, to provide mother's milk for a sick or preterm baby or for missed feedings when away from baby.



- **Mind:** Close your eyes, relax, and imagine your baby breastfeeding.
- **Sight:** Look at your baby or at your baby's photo.
- **Hearing:** Listen to a recording of your baby cooing or crying. If you're apart, call and check on your baby.
- **Smell:** Smell your baby's blanket or clothing.
- **Touch:** Apply a warm cloth or gently massage your breasts.
- **Taste:** Sip a favorite warm drink to relax you.

If using an electric pump, check to see if your pump has both SUCTION/VACUUM and CYCLE/SPEED controls. If so, use your senses as you adjust the controls to get more milk faster. Watch your milk flow as you pump and use it as your guide.

- Set SUCTION/VACUUM to the highest setting that's comfortable.
- Set CYCLE/SPEED on the fastest setting.
- When milk starts to flow, turn CYCLE/SPEED down to near the slowest setting.
- When the milk flow slows to a trickle, return to fast CYCLE/SPEED and use your senses.

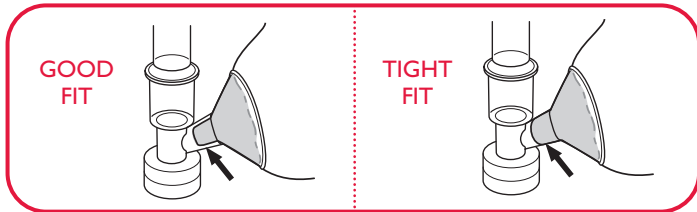
- Repeat, using fast CYCLE/SPEED to trigger milk releases and slow cycles to drain.

If using a manual pump like the Ameda One-Hand Breast Pump, you can do the same by using both fast and slow squeezes. Again, watch your milk flow and use it as your guide. Change breasts every 5-7 minutes for a total of 20 to 30 minutes.

QUESTION: How do I know if I'm using the right size breast flange?

ANSWER: Some mothers do well with the standard size. You need another size Ameda flange if pumping hurts, even on low suction. If the standard Ameda flange (25.0 mm) is too small or too large, a better-fitting flange may feel better and pump more milk.

To check your flange fit, watch your nipple during pumping. If you see a little space around your nipple, you have a good fit. If your nipple rubs against the sides of the flange, it is too tight (see drawings below). If too much of the dark area around the nipple is pulled in or the nipple bounces in and out of the tunnel, you need a smaller flange.



QUESTION: How long should I pump?

ANSWER: Talk to your healthcare provider. In most cases, 10-15 minutes per breast is long enough.

QUESTION: When should I pump?

ANSWER: If you are at home with baby and fully breastfeeding:

- Pump in the morning. This is when most women get more milk.
- Pump 30-60 minutes after nursing and at least an hour before nursing. This should leave plenty of milk for your baby at the next feeding.

If your baby wants to breastfeed right after a pumping, go ahead. Some babies are patient and will just feed longer to get the milk they need.



“When pumping, most milk comes only when a let-down, or milk release, happens.”

If you are pumping for a baby who is not breastfeeding, plan to pump 8-10 times each day. Full milk production is 25-35 oz. (750-1,035 ml) per day. With full milk production, most mothers can maintain their milk by pumping 6-7 times a day.

QUESTION: How much milk should I expect to pump?

ANSWER: This will vary, depending on your baby's age, time since last breastfeeding or pumping, time of day, pump quality, how much practice you've had with your pump, and whether you're relaxed or stressed. But on average if you are fully breastfeeding:

- When pumping between feedings, expect to pump about half a feeding.
- When pumping for a missed breastfeeding, expect a full feeding.

Baby's Age	Average Feeding
First week (after Day 4)	1-2 oz. (30-60 mL)
1 to 3 weeks	2-3 oz. (60-90 mL)
1-6 months	3-5 oz. (90-150 mL)

Babies often take more milk from the bottle than you pump in one pumping session. This may not mean your milk production is low. The faster, steadier flow of the bottle causes some babies to take more than they need. A slow-flow bottle may help a baby to feel full with less milk.

This is general information and does not replace the advice of your healthcare provider. If you have a problem you cannot solve quickly, seek help right away.

Every baby is different, if in doubt, contact your physician or other healthcare provider.