

How to Hand Express Breast or Chest Milk

Yarmouth Regional Hospital

- Hand expressing is a way to take milk from your breasts or chest. It is also called manual (by hand) expressing. Hand expressing can be done when you do not have a breast pump. Your nurse will help you learn how to do this. Please tell your nurse if you have any questions or concerns.
- It is important to learn how to hand express breast or chest milk in the first hours after your baby is born. Hand expressing at least 5 times a day in the first 3 to 4 days after your baby is born, can help your milk supply.
- Hand expressing:
 - › Helps you make milk
 - › Helps your milk come in (also called milk let-down)

How to hand express breast or chest milk

When you are first learning, you can follow along with this video:

› www.moremilksooner.com/videos

1. **Always wash your hands before hand expressing or handling your expressed milk.**
2. Place a wet, warm cloth on your breasts or chest for a few minutes before starting. This may make expressing easier.
3. Gently roll or tug on your nipple. This will help to make expressing easier. Gently massaging your breasts or chest towards the nipple can improve milk flow.
 - › Move your thumb and index finger to make a C-shape just outside the dark area around your nipple (areola).
 - › Push your thumb and index finger back towards your breast or chest. Gently squeeze, then release the pressure.



4. Keep squeezing and releasing until you see drops of milk. Squeeze all the way around your areola so that you reach all of the milk ducts (where the milk is stored).

Hand expressing is a skill you can learn. It will get easier with practice. At first, you will get only a few drops — this is normal. With practice, you will learn what is normal for you.

5. When you see drops of milk, collect them in the cup you were given. Add them to the syringe when you are done. You can also collect them directly into the syringe. **Remember to put the cap on the end of the syringe** so the milk stays clean.
6. Repeat steps 1 to 7 on your other breast or the other side of your chest. You can hand express each breast or side of your chest for 2 to 3 minutes, 2 times a day.
7. Start a new syringe each day.
 - › Keep the milk that you express for the first time each day in the fridge. Make sure that any other milk you express that day cools to room temperature before you add it to the syringe in the fridge.
 - › At the end of each day, label the syringe with the date it was collected. You may notice you are expressing more milk each day.

Do not store expressed milk for more than 24 hours in the fridge. After 24 hours, move the syringe to the freezer.

This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

Find all patient education resources here:
www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time:
Call 811 or visit: <https://811.novascotia.ca>

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