

# How to Hand Express Breast Milk

## Yarmouth Regional Hospital

Hand expressing is a way to take milk from your breasts. Hand expressing is also called ‘manual expressing.’ Your nurses will help you learn how to do this. Please tell us if you have any questions or problems.

It is important to learn how to hand express breast milk in the first hours after your baby is born. If hand expressing is done at least 5 times each day in the first 3-4 days after delivery, it can really help your milk supply.

Hand expressing helps milk production and milk let-down (release). It can be helpful to hand express when a pump is not available.

**How to hand express breast milk (when you are first learning, you may wish to follow along with this video: <https://www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca/home/articles/video-hand-expressing-breastmilk>):**

1. Always wash your hands before hand expressing or handling your expressed milk.
2. Placing a wet warm cloth on your breasts for a few minutes before starting may make expressing easier.
3. Gently roll or tug on your nipple. This will also help to make expression easier. Gently stimulate your breasts by massaging the breast toward the nipple.
4. Move your thumb and index finger to make a C-shape just outside the dark area of your nipple (areola).
5. Push your thumb and index finger back towards your breasts and gently squeeze, then release the pressure.
6. Repeat this squeezing and releasing rhythm/motion until you see drops of milk. Squeeze all the way around your areola so that you reach all of the milk ducts.

**Hand expression is a learned skill. It will get easier with practice. Don't worry if you don't get a lot of milk. Getting only a few drops is normal.**

7. When you start to see drops of milk, collect them into the small cup provided, then add them to the syringe when you're done, or collect them directly into the syringe. Remember to put the cap on the end of the syringe so the milk stays clean.
8. Repeat steps 1-7 on your other breast. You can hand express each breast for 2-3 minutes, 2 times each day.
9. 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 same day cools to room temperature before adding 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.
10. If it's been 24 hours since you collected milk, move it to the freezer. **Never add fresh milk to frozen milk.**

**What are your questions? Please ask.  
We are here to help you.**

**In Nova Scotia you can call 811 to talk with  
a registered nurse about your health care  
questions 24/7.**

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For more information, go to <http://library.novascotia.ca>

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

Learn about other programs and services in your community: call 211 or visit <http://ns.211.ca>

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