

How to Use a Breast Pump

Life gets busy, especially when you have a new member of the family who may want to eat—a lot.

For times when you're away from your baby, a breast pump can help.

Keep in mind that using a breast pump can take 20 minutes per breast.

Or even longer when you're first learning how to use it.

This is normal, so don't worry.

Using a breast pump is a skill that gets easier with practice.

Here are some things you can do to get ready to pump breast milk.

First, make sure your supplies are clean.

Read the instructions for your pump, and make sure all the parts have been washed and dried.

Breast pumps include a breast shield that fits over the nipple, a pump—which can be manual, battery-powered, or electric—and a container for collecting milk.

Next, prepare your space.

Set up in a place that's clean and comfortable for you.

You may want to have a glass of water within reach.

And you'll want to wash your hands before touching the breast shield or your breasts.

Once you're set up, you can prep your pump.

Follow the instructions that came with your pump, and put all the parts in place.

Now, place the breast shield over your breast with your nipple in the middle.

And start pumping.

Start with a low-level setting—or squeezing the pump slowly—and increase the pump's suction as the milk starts to flow.

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Some pumps will do this for you.

Check the instructions to see if yours does.

Continue to pump until your breast is empty.

While the pump is working, you'll feel a tugging.

But it should not be painful.

Once your breast is empty, you can turn the pump off.

Your breast should feel soft with no hard areas.

Repeat this process with your other breast— unless you're already using a machine that pumps both breasts at the same time.

Use your milk right away or store it in the fridge or freezer just after pumping if you plan to use the milk later.

Here are some troubleshooting tips that may come in handy.

One: If pumping is painful, stop.

Try changing the position of the breast shield.

Or try some different shields to find the one that fits you best.

When pumping, your nipple should fit inside the tunnel of the breast shield with no rubbing.

Two: If pumping is still painful, try using a lower-level setting—or squeezing more slowly—on your pump.

Three: Help get your milk flowing.

If your milk isn't flowing easily, try holding your baby while you pump.

If your baby isn't close by, you can look at a picture of them or try smelling a piece of their clothing.

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You can also try gently massaging your breast or putting a warm, wet cloth against your breast.

And if you're still having trouble pumping breast milk, you can always talk with your doctor or a lactation consultant.

They may have other ideas that can help.

Using a breast pump can be tricky at first.

But using one can be helpful for both you and your baby.