

- looking at a picture of your baby or babies while expressing/pumping
- listening to a relaxation tape
- listening to music, reading or thinking happy thoughts while expressing/pumping
- listening to a tape of your baby's sounds
- putting one of your baby's blankets over your arm on the side you are pumping. Think of the heaviness of your baby against your arm, the softness of his/her skin, etc.
- drinking a glass of water

You may find that your milk supply decreases if you are pumping over a long period of time – 2 to 3 weeks or longer. Ask for help.

If you have extra milk (150 ounces or more). Consider donating it to the BC Women's Provincial Milk Bank. Call BC Women's Lactation Service at 604-875-2282.

**It's good to ask!**

**Developed by:**  
BC Women's Lactation Services

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BCW982

# HELPFUL HINTS:

For starting and keeping up  
your milk supply when your  
baby is not breastfeeding.

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## After birth some babies do not or cannot breastfeed.

Here are some steps to take to help start and keep up your milk supply when your baby is not breastfeeding.

- ▶ Start to express your breasts by hand as soon as possible after birth. Try to do this within one hour of birth and by 6 hours. Hand expression often works better than a pump during the first 24 hours.
- ▶ Expressing/pumping frequently you will increase your milk supply. When you first start expressing, you may not get any colostrum. Colostrum is the first food your baby gets after birth. Even the smallest amount of colostrum can be saved for your baby. Ask your nurse to help you use a syringe or spoon to collect drops of colostrum on your nipple. Milk for use in the NICU needs to be stored in a capped, labelled syringe or bottle.
- ▶ By 24 hours after birth, combine hand expression with pumping. Use "hands on pumping" which means using your hands and the electric pump together. More information on "hands on pumping" can be found in the pamphlet *Breast Massage, Expression and 'Hands on' Pumping of Mother's Milk*.
- ▶ Express your breasts 8 times or more in 24 hours, This means at least every 2-3 hours during the day and at least once at night.
- ▶ When you are pumping one breast at a time, use a single pump kit. Pump each breast for 5 minutes. Switch back and forth for a total of about 20 minutes. Use breast massage and compression while pumping. Hand express for a few minutes after pumping.
- ▶ When you are pumping both breasts at the same time use two pump kits. Pump for about 10 to 15 minutes. Pump longer if milk flow continues. Use breast massage and compression while pumping. Hand express for a few minutes after you stop pumping.
- ▶ Once milk is flowing, pump a few more minutes after the flow stops.
- ▶ Start at the lowest suction. Increase the suction slowly. Pumping should be comfortable. If your nipples are tender, keep the suction low, switch from breast to breast sooner and put a small amount of lubricant on the inside of the funnel where your nipple slides in and out. Check that the size of the flange fits your nipple
- ▶ Lean forward so the milk goes into the bottle.
- ▶ It may be helpful to support your breast by cupping it in your hand while you pump.
- ▶ To help your milk flow, try:
  - holding your baby(ies) skin-to-skin as soon as possible and expressing/pumping right afterward
  - put warm compresses on your breasts before and while you express/pump
  - massaging your breasts before you begin expressing/pumping and off and on while you are pumping
  - gently rubbing the nipple on one breast while you express/pump the other
  - expressing/pumping in a comfortable place or at your baby's bedside
  - sitting down and putting your feet up for five minutes before beginning to express/pump
  - relaxing your arms and back and taking several slow deep breaths