



# Hand Expression of Breast Milk

Hand expression (or manual expression) of breast milk is the removal of milk from the breast using a massage and compression technique.

You may need to do this if you will be away from your baby during a feeding time or to get milk for your baby if he or she cannot breastfeed. Hand expression is a useful tool to help breastfeeding mothers produce more milk. It may take some time and practice to learn this technique, but we are here to help you succeed.

## Getting Ready:

- Start by washing your hands.
- Sit up in a chair or bed.
- Gently massage your breast using your hands or a warm towel.

## Step-by-Step Directions:

The basic steps are: Press – Compress – Relax

- **Press:** Place your thumb and fingers about 1 to 1.5 inches away from your nipple in a “C” shape. Press back toward your chest.
- **Compress:** While pushing back against your chest, bring your thumb and fingers together gently.
- **Relax** your fingers.

## To continue hand expression:

- Keep your thumb and forefinger in the same place until no more drops of milk come out.
- Next, switch your finger position by moving your thumb to another place around the areola (darker area around the nipple). . Repeat the Press, Compress, Relax technique.
- Continue hand expression for 5-10 minutes and then switch to the other breast.
- Develop a rhythm that is similar to how your baby nurses.

It is normal to get a few or no drops of milk the first few times you hand express your breast milk. With practice, you will get more milk.

The best way to collect your colostrum (first milk) is in a medicine cup or a teaspoon. After your mature milk comes in, you can collect your breast milk in any clean container. Refrigerate or freeze your milk if you are not going to use it right away.

## Online resources

Visit [kp.org/mydoctor](http://kp.org/mydoctor) to:

- View most lab results and check your preventive health reminders
- Email your doctor
- Use interactive online tools to help keep you and your family healthy

This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other health care professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have additional questions, please consult with your doctor.