

## Breast Pumps/Pumping

Keith Merritt, MD

### Basics

- A breast pump is a mechanical device used to pump milk from a woman's breasts when she cannot breastfeed her baby directly because of work or problems with her nipples or because the baby is in the hospital.
- May also be used to "get ahead" between feedings
  - Milk may be stored for later use (see below)
- A breast pump is not necessary for every woman
- Wait until after your baby is born before you select a pump
- There is a wide variety of pumps
  - Vary in cost, speed and efficiency
  - Make sure you fit the right pump to your need.

### Types of Breast Pumps

- Hospital grade electric pumps
  - Fastest and most powerful
  - May be rented(see Breast Pump Sales/Rental) for home use
  - Best for mothers who cannot breastfeed their baby directly & need to maintain their milk supply
  - Empties both breasts within 10-15 minutes after milk letdown
  - Covered by some commercial insurance plans

- Personal use electric pumps
  - Fast but not as fast as Hospital grade pumps
  - Meant to be used several times each day but not as effective for mothers who are not breastfeeding directly & who need to maintain milk supply long term
  - Life expectancy with regular use around one year
    - Not meant to be shared & should not be sold as used
  - Comes in carrying case- useful for travel and pumping at work
- Single sided pumps
  - Slower & will drain only one breast at a time
  - Requires 20 – 30 minutes to drain both breasts
  - May be hand, battery or electric powered
  - Recommended only for occasional use

### **Insurance Coverage of Breast Pump Cost**

- Affordable Health Care act of 2012 requires insurance companies to cover *“Comprehensive lactation support and counseling by a trained provider during pregnancy and/or in the post-partum period, and the costs for renting breastfeeding equipment in conjunction with each birth”*.
- Contact your insurance company to verify coverage
  - Some require a written prescription
- Up to insurance company to determine the type of pump & the length of coverage

### **Using a Breast Pump**

- Read directions for each pump before 1<sup>st</sup> use

- Wash hands with soap and water before starting
  - Do not need to wash breasts/nipples
- Make sure pump pieces and storage containers are clean
  - Soap & warm water are sufficient with healthy infants
  - Do not wash the tubing since it does not dry easily
    - If milk or moisture is noted in the tubing, you may need to purchase new tubing
- Sit in a comfortable place
- Make sure the cone shaped pump pieces that fit over your breasts are sized correctly- your nipples should not rub against the tunnel pieces
  - Accessories and replacement parts should be the same brand as the pump
- Pumping should not be painful even if you have sore nipples
  - Set pump strength & cycle speed to levels that are comfortable

## **Milk Let Down (Milk Ejection Reflex)**

- Your milk must “let-down” before it can be drained by the pump
  - Secretion of milk by milk glands into the milk ducts
  - Usually begins within 1 -2 minutes of putting the baby to your breast or of starting the breast pump
  - Often causes a sense of heaviness or tingling in your breasts
- A conditioned response to your baby being put to your breast
  - Caused by secretion of a hormone called *oxytocin* from your brain
  - May be caused by hearing your baby cry or by just thinking about your baby
  - For women who pump exclusively, often caused by just seeing the breast pump or by hearing it run
- If your milk does not let down soon after starting the pump
  - Turn off the pump
  - Massage your breasts gently
  - Place a warm, wet washcloth over your breasts for a few minutes
  - Make sure you are in a private, safe, darkened room
  - Look at a your baby or picture of your baby or smell the baby’s blanket when restarting the pump

## **Pumping at Work**

- Try to remain on your pumping schedule
  - Typically 2-3 times over an eight hour work day
- Some employers have a dedicated pumping room

- However, may be difficult if you are the first employee to pump
- *The Patient Protection and Affordable Health Care Law of 2010* requires
  - *“reasonable break time for an employee to express breast milk for her nursing child for one year after the child’s birth each time such employee has need to express the milk”* and
  - *“a place other than a bathroom, that is shielded from view and free from intrusion from coworkers and the public, which may be used by an employer to express breast milk”*
    - [http://op.bna.com/dlrcases.nsf/id/vros-87mrpv/\\$File/breaktime.pdf](http://op.bna.com/dlrcases.nsf/id/vros-87mrpv/$File/breaktime.pdf).

### **Pumping for a Premature or Ill Infant**

- First few weeks after delivery are critical in establishing supply
  - Requires hormonal & structural changes in the breast
  - Helps to massage both breasts before starting to pump
  - After flow has stopped, finish by hand expressing remaining milk into a container
  - Link to educational video:
    - [Stanford School of medicine: Maximizing milk production with Hands on Pumping](#)
- Start pumping within 6 hours of delivery then pump at least every 3 hours for 15 minutes each session
  - Remain on this schedule until producing ½ oz (15ml) per breast
- Once production is established pump 6 -8 times per day
  - pump for 2 minutes beyond the point that flow has stopped
- Expect supply by end of first week to be around 320 ml (11 oz) per day

### **Storing Breast Milk**

- Storing 1 – 4 oz per container most convenient for later use

- May use sealed glass or plastic bottles designed for storing food products for all infants
- May also use plastic storage bags if infant is not in the hospital
  - loses nutrients
- Sterilize containers in boiling water before 1<sup>st</sup> use
- Wash bottles with soap and warm water between uses
- May be stored
  - At room temperature for up to 4 hours
  - In the refrigerator for up to 5 days
    - Note- begins losing antibacterial properties after 24 hours
  - In the freezer for up to 6 months
- May store thawed milk in refrigerator for up to 2 days
- May refreeze thawed milk
- Date each container so you use the oldest milk first

### **Rewarming Stored Milk**

- Warm slowly
- Do not use microwave
  - Rapid heating destroys important properties of breast milk
  - Heats unevenly- may burn infant's mouth
- Warm in pot of warm water (do not submerge entire container)
- Test on your forearm immediately before feeding to your baby
  - Should be just a little more warm than your skin- lukewarm

- Swirl bottle before feeding to redistribute the cream

### **How much to Feed**

- General guideline- multiply your baby's weight (pounds) by 2.5
  - Number of ounces in 24 hours
  - Some require more and others less
  - Around 24 oz per day at one week of age

### **Feeding Breast Milk from a Bottle**

- Babies feed much more quickly from a bottle than from the breast
  - Because the bottle's nipple has a faster flow
  - Common concern with mothers that baby is not being given enough
- May pace bottle feeding by taking breaks so that each feeding takes 10 to 15 minutes just like the time required for breast feeding
  - May also use slow flow nipples

[Back to Acacia Ob/Gyn Website](#)