

# *The Gentle Latch*



INFANT FEEDING AND  
TONGUE TIE SERVICE

## All About Expressing

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# What is Expressing?

Expressing means **removing milk from the breast without your baby feeding directly**. This can be done by hand or using a pump.

Some parents express regularly, while others only express occasionally. There is no single “right” way — it depends on you and your baby’s needs.

## When expressing may be helpful

You may choose to express if:

- Your breasts feel very full or uncomfortable
- Your baby is not feeding effectively yet
- Your baby is separated from you
- You want someone else to offer a feed
- You are returning to work or planning time away
- You need to protect or increase milk supply
- Your baby needs extra milk after a feed

## When expressing may not be helpful

Expressing is not always needed and can sometimes increase milk supply more than your baby needs.

You may wish to avoid or limit expressing if:

- You have oversupply or fast flow
- Baby is feeding well directly at the breast
- You are expressing large amounts for comfort only
- Expressing is causing stress or discomfort

If unsure, seek feeding support.

## Ways to express milk

### Hand expressing

Hand expressing uses your hands to gently remove milk from the breast.

#### Useful for:

- Early days after birth
- Collecting small amounts (colostrum)
- Softening the breast before a feed
- Relieving fullness

#### How to:

1. Wash hands.
2. Place thumb and fingers about 2–3 cm behind the nipple.
3. Press back towards the chest, then gently compress and release.
4. Repeat rhythmically, rotating around the breast.
5. Hand expressing should not be painful.

### Manual pump

A manual pump is operated by hand.

#### Useful for:

- Occasional expressing
- When away from home
- Short expressing sessions



## Electric pump

Electric pumps use a motor to create suction.

### Useful for:

- Regular expressing
- Maintaining supply when baby is not feeding directly
- Expressing larger amounts of milk

Make sure the flange (breast shield) fits comfortably — pumping should not hurt.

### Gentle Latch tips for expressing

- Try to express when you feel relaxed
- Warmth and gentle breast massage can help milk flow
- Looking at or thinking about your baby may help let-down
- Expressing after a feed often feels more comfortable than before
- Milk amounts vary — this is normal

### Storage and safety

- Use clean containers
- Label milk with date and time
- Follow current guidance for fridge and freezer storage

## Remember

### Supply and Demand



The more milk that is removed, the more milk your body is signalled to make.

Over-expressing can unintentionally increase supply and may lead to:

- Oversupply
- Engorgement
- Blocked ducts
- Mastitis
- A fast flow that baby may struggle with

Only express for a clear reason (comfort, building supply, storing milk, replacing a feed, etc.).

### Avoid Over-Pumping

- In most situations, **5–15 minutes per breast is sufficient**
- Pumping much longer does not usually increase output
- Stop once milk flow slows significantly and breasts feel softer
- More time does not always mean more milk

If exclusively pumping, follow a structured plan rather than pumping continuously.

### Do Not Express to “Empty” the Breast Completely

Breasts are never truly empty.

Trying to fully empty them repeatedly can overstimulate production.





## Expressing for Comfort

If breasts feel full or uncomfortable:

- Remove just enough milk to feel comfortable
- Avoid fully draining the breast unless advised
- Gentle hand expression can sometimes be more appropriate than pumping

## Watch for Signs You May Be Overdoing It

- Increasing fullness between feeds
- Baby coughing/spluttering at the breast
- Recurrent blocked ducts
- Green, frothy stools (in some cases)
- Feeling constantly engorged

If this happens, review your expressing frequency.

## Be Gentle

- Use the correct flange size
- Avoid high suction settings
- Pumping should not be painful
- Nipple trauma is a sign something needs adjusting

## When to seek support

- Expressing is painful
  - Milk supply feels too low or too high
  - You are unsure how often to express
  - Feeding or expressing feels stressful
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