

# Ten Steps for Effective Pumping

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Pumping can be a challenge under the best of circumstances. It feels a little strange because it's a new skill to learn, and sometimes can be frustrating to figure out. It's important to remember that no pump is as effective at milk extraction as a baby. Below are some tried and true tips to help you get started.

## 1. Use a Decent Pump

You may not need a full size pump if you only pump occasionally as a stay at home mom, but it is still worthwhile to learn the differences between pumps. The range is broad; from hospital grade double electric to manual pump. Don't discount hand expression-many mothers get quite good at this and like this better than any pump. Talk to a registered lactation consultant to identify which pump may be best for your situation. Avoid a previously owned pump; in addition to being against FDA regulations due to contamination, pump motors often wear out gradually. You may still feel suction, but the motor may be impaired by age, or even storage conditions in extreme temperatures (such as an attic).

## 2. Pump When You Are Comfortable

Don't make the first time that you pump a "gotta". Pump after a feeding to see what it feels like and to learn about your pump. You won't get much, but that doesn't matter. Be sure that you are comfortable, sitting up straight with your back supported by a pillow or cushion if needed. When you are at work or school, pump where you will be undisturbed; if you can listen to music, this may increase your sense of privacy.

## 3. Adjust Your Suction

High suction doesn't necessarily mean more milk; it usually means pain! Additionally, if the suction setting is too strong, it can actually collapse the ducts and prevent milk flow-leading you to believe that you are losing your supply. Instead, adjust your suction setting to a comfortable place and leave it there.

## 4. Adjust Your Speed

Depending on the type of pump you are using, you may also have a speed adjustment. This setting can really help with effective pumping. Start off at the highest speed-a hungry baby sucks vigorously. When your milk starts to flow with let down (which you may or may not feel), slow the speed down to the mid range. If you want to trigger another let down, increase the speed again when milk flow slows to a trickle.

## 5. Think of Your Baby

To trigger the milk ejection reflex (or let down), think of your baby. Pump while she is sleeping or playing so you can watch her. If you are at work or school, bring a picture to look at. In addition, breast massage before and during pumping can help you relax and allow the ducts to empty. Inhaling his scent from an item of clothing or a blanket serves as a form of aromatherapy and helps with let down.

## 6. Think Ahead

If you are preparing to return to work or school, start early-at least two weeks before you return. This will help you create a stock pile of milk, and also prepare your body for the adjustment of exclusive pumping during the day. The same rule applies if you will be separated from your baby such as a trip or hospitalization.

## 7. Tenderness While Pumping

If your nipples feel sore while pumping, first check the suction settings (see #3). If the settings are ok, you can apply a little olive or vegetable oil at the bend of the pump flange where the nipple is centered to reduce friction. Avoid lanolin at this site because it can actually create a drag on the skin due to the stickiness of the ointment, increasing your soreness. If this still doesn't help, talk to a lactation consultant to evaluate whether or not you have the correctly sized flanges.

## 8. Lamaze Breathing

All of that Lamaze breathing that you learned in childbirth class can help you pump as well. Slow deep breaths help with relaxation, contributing to milk let down.

**9. Longer Isn't Better**

If you are pumping to increase your milk supply, longer times pumping usually only lead to soreness. It is actually better to double pump for 15 min more frequently; this stimulates higher levels of hormone release.

**10. Multitask!**

Pumping can get really boring. Once you get used to pumping, you can do other things at the same time. This can provide a distraction, and can also help with milk ejection reflex. Some things that you can do while pumping are working on the computer, talking on the phone, writing, watching TV, or eating-something moms don't always have time for!

**For questions or concerns about breastfeeding, or for pumps and feeding equipment, call All The Best at 749-2327 or visit [www.feedyourbaby.com](http://www.feedyourbaby.com).**