

Guide to Pumping

Flange size

Please choose your flange based on comfort and efficiency, not measurement alone. Most pump manufacturers offer several different sizes and you will want to experiment to find out which size works best for you. Using a **flange sizing kit** can be very helpful. These can be purchased for around \$10 and typically contain inserts to adapt a 24mm flange to sizes 13mm, 15mm, 17mm, 19mm and 21mm. Each kit comes with a nipple measurement tool.

A video “Fitting Pump Flanges” is available on the IABLE site: <https://lacted.org/iable-video/>

Comfort

*Apply a trace of olive oil, or a nipple cream e.g. Motherlove or Earth Mama, to the flange **before** each session to prevent chafing. You can also buy a pumping spray for this purpose.*

You can buy alternative flanges such as LacTeck (silicone) or Pumpin Pal Super Shields (angled). Follow the sizing advice on the manufacturer’s website, and check for compatibility with your pump.

Here’s information on MayMom MyFit shields:

<https://maymom.com/index.php/products-menu/breastshield-selection-guide>

Releasing your milk (letdown)

For effective pumping you may want to take a moment to stimulate your letdown **before** starting your pump session, and skip your pump’s massage or letdown cycle. Experiment to find out what’s best for you. Following are some ideas but please Google “tips for letdown while pumping”.

- Gently roll your nipples between thumb and forefinger
- Apply warm moist heat to your breasts
- Warm the pump flange
- Breast massage
- Listen to music
- Think about your baby
- Having a snack and a warm drink

Pain, stress, anxiety and cold may prevent milk release.

To build your supply

- Aim for a minimum of 8 pump sessions each 24 hours with at least one of these at night.
- Max interval at night 4 hours until you’re satisfied with your supply.
- No need for a schedule. Pump when you can.
- The shorter the interval the shorter the pump session. Range will be 10-25 minutes.
- Pumping not only drains the accumulated milk, telling your breasts to make more, but also maintains a good level of the hormone **prolactin**. This is why you must pump at night. Prolactin is the “enabling” hormone making lactation possible.
- Once a day try a **power-pump**: 5-10 minutes on then 5-10 minutes off for an hour or two to mimic how newborns cluster-feed.
- Pumping both breasts simultaneously is efficient and may result in more milk.

Cluster pumping: Another way to help increase supply is to pump for 10 mins every hour or so for several hours.

How to pump

Wash your hands before each pump session and avoid touching the inside of the pump shield (also called the pump flange) – the part that touches your breast.

Check to see if there's a YouTube video guide for using your pump. Many pumps start out in some sort of stimulation mode. As soon as you see drops of milk on your nipple tips you can switch your pump to the expression mode. Now increase the suction but only as high as you are comfortable. If your pump has a separate control for speed (cycles per minute) please experiment to find what works best for you.

A Google search on pumping tips will give you some good ideas. Some mothers stop pumping when the milk flow slows down, massage and then start another (shorter) session. Other mothers cycle back and forth between stimulation and expression modes.

Cleaning your pump kit

The CDC has published strict guidelines for keeping your pump kit clean. These recommendations were developed after bacterial contamination of a pump kit caused severe illness in an infant born at 29 weeks. Please find the CDC information at the following link:

<https://www.cdc.gov/hygiene/about/about-breast-pump-hygiene.html>

Current community practice, for a healthy, full-term baby at home, is a compromise between the CDC recommendations and the need for efficiency when pumping frequently. Mothers are storing the used kit in the fridge (in a container or Ziploc bag) and re-using this kit several times. After a maximum of 12 hours they wash the kit very thoroughly, sanitizing once a day. This is known as the "fridge hack".

If you refrigerate your kit you may want to run warm water over the flanges right before use as warmth can help your milk release.

Washing

Take the kit apart completely and rinse with cold water to remove proteins that might stick to the plastic. Now wash with hot water and liquid detergent, just as you would a drinking glass. Rinse well and air dry. If a few spots of water remain at next use this is not a problem. If you are storing your kit for a while use a clean paper towel to dry thoroughly.

Consider a wearable pump

These are now available at a variety of prices and have become very popular. Mothers enjoy the mobility that a wearable pump allows.

Maintaining a good supply if exclusively pumping

Once you have reached your supply goal then you can experiment to see how many sessions you need. For an insight on this process please Google "Nancy Mohrbacher magic number". Some mothers are able to reduce frequency below five daily sessions but other mothers may need at least seven. Keep track of your 24-hour output to see what works for you. If your supply drops you will need to increase frequency to bring it back on track. Please Google "exclusive pumping" as you will find loads of helpful tips. Kellymom.com has great information on pumping, as does the site exclusivepumping.com.

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