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Using a Breast Pump

There are many reasons for wanting to express breastmilk. The most important decision is choosing a pump which suits your needs and situation, and then storing your breastmilk appropriately.

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In many instances, breast milk direct from mum will be more convenient and provides many added benefits such as skin-to-skin bonding. While early use of bottles, especially before the first breastfeed, can interfere with the natural processes of breastfeeding by reducing the infant's sucking capacity and the stimulation of the mother's breasts, there are many situations in which expressing breastmilk and feeding from a bottle may be required. Some of the most common reasons you may want to use a breast pump include:

- To stimulate your milk production when you are unable to breast feed your baby directly after birth, such as when your baby is premature or your baby is unable to suck adequately.
- You or your baby are in hospital and unable to feed them directly.
- To maintain your milk supply when you are away from your baby (eg. after returning to work).
- You are leaving your baby with a baby sitter while you are out.
- Many mothers like to store breast milk for emergencies, as exclusive breastfeeding is recommended for the first 6 months.

Choosing a pump

There are a large range of breast pumps on the market. You can choose from electric or hand held pumps and your choice may depend on how much you require or intend to use it.

Additional items

If you choose to use a breast pump, there are additional equipment you will need to attain, including:

- Breast milk storage satchels (available at chemists and supermarkets and baby specialist stores)
- Baby bottles and teats – there are a large variety of bottles and teats available and many mothers find they need to try a range of teats to find which one your baby will accept
- Steriliser for cleaning all equipment.

Sterilisers

Breast pumps and bottles need to be disassembled and sterilised before each use. There is generally two methods of sterilisation: Either using cold water and adding a non-toxic sterilisation solution, available through pharmacies; or by using heat via a microwave or electric steam steriliser. If you are not using the equipment again straight away, you can simply wash the equipment and then sterilise before the next use.

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