

# About Pumps

**Hand expression** is used by most of the world's working women. It takes some practice, but can be quick and easy, and your hands are always available. Try expressing into a large bowl or clean margarine tub at first. Massage your breasts and shake them gently. Put your thumb on one edge of your areola (the darker part around your nipple) and two fingers on the opposite edge. Press back toward your chest. Now press your fingers toward each other and draw them out away from your chest. Don't slide your fingers over your skin; slide your skin over the underlying tissues. It's a little like stripping toothpaste from the back of the tube toward the spout. After a few repeats, shift your fingers to new positions on the edge of your areola and continue. When you see milk spurt, you know you've got it right.

**Rental pumps** are usually the most effective pump besides a baby. The really heavy ones may have an edge over the lighter weight ones if you're pumping for a baby who can't nurse, but most working mothers do fine with the lighter ones. Cost is usually under \$200 for 5 months - about the same as 2 months of formula, not counting the added medical expenses of formula-feeding. If there are mechanical problems, the rental station is responsible. The suction and cycling speed (about one cycle per second) are similar to those of a baby, although babies also stroke the milk out - something no North American pump does very well. All rental pumps allow "double pumping" - pumping both sides at the same time - which reduces the time needed and may yield a bit more milk. Most women are happy with a rental pump, and it is usually the best choice if you need a pump to help with a breastfeeding problem.

**Large electric double pumps** can be a good substitute for a rental pump, unless you have a breastfeeding problem. Ask about the warrantee, and remember that any problems outside the warrantee will be yours to fix.

**Small electric double pumps** must sacrifice something to keep the cost down. Either the suction is lower or the speed is slower - if suction depends on a finger going on and off a hole, it may be as slow as 1 cycle every 12 seconds. You get what you pay for, and there is a reason these pumps are inexpensive. Still, they are a good choice for some women. Ask about the warrantee. Many of these pumps are not designed for use several times a day longterm, and will not hold up well as a working mother's pump.

**Small electric single pumps**, sometimes called "Saturday night specials," have all the drawbacks listed above, and can pump only one side at a time. For every small pump that one woman loves, there is another woman who dislikes it. Some women buy two single pumps, and double pump. Look for pumps made by companies that make only breastfeeding equipment. Pumps made by formula, baby food, and bottle companies expect to have your business even if their pump fails - maybe especially if their pump fails. Be sure to return any pump that doesn't work for you, so that stores learn to stock good pumps. Look for a plug-in option. Batteries wear out too quickly to be fully reliable; save them for times when you can't get to an outlet. Otherwise, use the plug. And remember to ask about the warrantee.

**Manual pumps** may take more time than electric pumps, and certainly take more concentration. On the other hand, they don't need an outlet. They are mainly for mothers who use an occasional bottle, rather than for a full-time working mother. Again, stay away from pumps made by companies that make other infant feeding supplies.

**As a general rule:** Breastfeeding problems? Rental pump. Working mom? Rental or large double electric. Occasional use? Small electric pump or manual pump. And hand expression can be used for any of the above, is absolutely free, and is always available.