



Breastfeeding Newsletter

JUNE 21, 2013

VOLUME 1, NUMBER 9

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Breastpumps: Options and tips

By Brittany Dain, Breastfeeding Peer Counselor

A previous newsletter entitled "Will I need to pump?" addressed common reasons why women use breastpumps, and how to know if you need one or not. This newsletter will assume a breastpump is needed and/or desired, and the common questions women have about their use.

What kind of pump should I use?

There are many breastpump options available to moms that range greatly in price, and it can be overwhelming to determine how much of an investment to make. My advice to women who are interested in using a pump is to first contact their local WIC chapter. Most WIC chapters offer breastfeeding resources, including several types of breastpumps available for free or significantly reduced rental fees. WIC staff are also trained in assessing women's situations to determine the best pump for their needs. Many women are surprised to learn that they qualify for WIC, and those who don't qualify may possibly receive advice and direction about how and where to obtain a pump at a reduced price.

Safety: New or Used? In recent years there has been a proliferation of "pump sharing" among mothers, via friends or relatives loaning out their electric personal use breast pump, or breastfeeding mothers attempting to save money by purchasing a used breastpump from a stranger online, at a resale shop or a garage sale. There are health risks to this. It has been falsely assumed that if a new accessories kit is purchased for the breastpump (tubing, flanges, bottles, etc), that there is no danger in this practice. This is false unless the pump has a *closed* motor system. "Closed motor" pumps tend to be expensive, ranging from \$300 to over \$1000, depending on their features and quality of the motor. Personal use pumps have an *open* motor system, and are often more affordable, commonly purchased for \$300 or less. It is never advisable to use a previously used breast pump. For more details on this, please read this article: [Are Used Breast Pumps a Good Option?](#)

Expected utilization: How often you expect to use a breastpump should be a factor in determining which kind of breastpump to buy. A simple, non-electric, **manual** or **battery operated** breastpump may be all you need if you intend to occasionally pump so that you can go on a date night or occasionally leave the baby with a sitter for a few hours for other reasons. These are a good "first option" for the mom who is not yet ready to make a financial investment in a larger electric pump. This type of pump is a low cost option, and the Medela Harmony one-handed manual breastpump is available to qualifying breastfeeding WIC participants for free. **Single user electric** breastpumps are another common type of breastpump. This type of pump is best for the mom who wants to purchase a new electric pump to keep, rather than rent, and who plans to use the pump on a daily basis. These range in cost, with cost often being reflective of the quality of the motor inside of

the pump, single or double sided capabilities, warranties, pump settings and cycles, and overall effectiveness. Some of the most affordable electric pumps are not as effective at milk removal as others. A WIC breastfeeding peer counselor, or an IBCLC (International Board Certified Lactation Consultant) can often easily assess your needs and indicate whether a certain type of pump will work well for you. WIC offers the Medela Pump-in-Style personal electric pump to fully breastfeeding mothers in specific situations (away from baby 32 hours/week for work/school, for example) and who meet certain requirements regarding breastfeeding goals and intentions. Most personal electric breast pumps have motors that will wear out after a certain number of hours spent pumping. This amount of time depends on the specific pump model. Personal electric breast pumps also offer varying ranges of "pump cycles" and settings for suction and speed. This can greatly affect the pump's effectiveness in milk removal. **Closed motor** breast pumps (such as the Medela Lactina or Medela Symphony) as well as being the only safe type of pump for multiple users, are often the best quality pumps as well. Not all "closed motor" pumps have large motors that will run for years of use (although the two mentioned above do). These pumps are often the best choice for mothers of premature babies, or for mothers who desire to rent a pump rather than purchase, for their everyday pumping needs. It is the best pump for the mother who is struggling with her milk supply because of the settings for cycles, speed, and suction they offer. This type of pump is loaned to qualifying breastfeeding WIC participants.

Pumping Tips

Read the instructions: Because pumps have various features and settings depending on the model, the most important thing to do before pumping is to thoroughly read the manufacturer's instructions on how to operate the breastpump.

Relax: Pumps are designed to replicate the natural milk removal that a baby does at the breast. For milk to "let down" a mother needs to be relaxed, and the hormones prolactin and oxytocin, released during breastfeeding, help a mother to do so. Many mothers find that thinking about, holding, or looking at their baby, breathing deeply, and avoiding staring at the flanges while pumping (as this can cause undue neck strain and/or concern over the amount of milk being expressed) to be helpful. It is best to approach pumping with a relaxed attitude in which you understand that you may not express much milk the first few times. That is ok, and to be expected. Most moms do not express even one ounce of milk the first few times they pump. It cannot be stressed enough that the amount of milk you are able to pump is NOT ever a reliable indicator of how much milk you are producing, nor how much milk baby is taking in. The healthy breastfed baby is usually much more efficient at getting milk from the breast than a pump is.

Massage: Combining the use of a breast pump with breast massage before and during pumping can increase the amount of milk expressed. For a great demonstration on how to do this check out this website:

<http://newborns.stanford.edu/Breastfeeding/MaxProduction.html>

More pumping tips: For more information about pumping check out this great resource: <http://kellymom.com/bf/pumpingmoms/pumping/bf-links-pumps/#tips> .

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