

Parenting Advice: 5 Tips for Using a Breast Pump



By Marie Burke

If you're a new or expectant mother, then your head is probably overflowing with questions and concerns about your baby. One common concern is feeding the baby: do you go for natural or formula milk? Should you go for natural, your next question is likely: how does a breast pump work? I've worked in the breast pump industry for many years as a supplier and adviser to hospitals and also on a private basis to new mothers. In this article, I'm going to cover the 5 top tips for using a breast pump. Also, see our website with an extensive [Breast Pump](#) FAQ section for more information.

Check out this parenting advice for top tips on using a breast pump.

Electric or manual?

You can choose between either an electric breast pump or manual depending on your preference, but I would recommend having both. Electric breast pumps are convenient but not always readily available if you need to nurse or feed while outside. In these cases, having a manual breast pump to hand can be a lifesaver.

Get a proper fitting flange

The flange is the piece of equipment that is placed around the nipple and secures to the breast. Having an improperly fitted flange can impede the flow of breast milk, so make sure you get one that fits securely with the nipple exactly in the middle. There are many different standard sizes of flange that can be bought, so you might need to try a few before you get the right fit. Don't worry if you can't find one that is just right for you – every breast is different and custom flanges can be made if you are unable to find off-the-shelf flanges that fit.

Make sure your pump is sterile or new

If this is not your first child or you are friends with mothers of slightly older children, you might already have access to a [breast pump](#) and be tempted to use that instead of buying new. This needs to be approached with caution for two reasons: firstly, reusing breast pumps raises the risk of spreading bacterial contamination, even if you clean it. Secondly, breast pumps are generally only designed to last a few years, so older pumps will likely suffer from declining motor performance. If you are going to use a second-hand breast pump make sure its fully disassembled and key parts

will need to be cleaned with bolting water. Ideally use a breast pump that operates a closed system, such as Ameda, for increased hygiene.

Choose single or double pumping

If your baby is struggling to feed naturally, you can't find many times to feed during the day or you're expressing a lot, consider double breast pumping. As the name suggests, this enables you to produce milk much faster. It's also particularly good if you need to produce more milk – studies have shown double breast pumping can produce on average around 18% more milk than single breast pumping.

Don't always use your breast pump

For all the convenience a breast pump offers, it's also important to find time to breast feed naturally if you can. A lot of new mothers choose to breast pump during the week and then feed naturally at the weekend and on holidays. Feeding naturally produces the feel-good chemical oxytocin and is a good opportunity for mother-child bonding. Finding the right mix of natural feeding and using a breast pump will take experience and depends entirely on your lifestyle, but don't exclusively rely on one or the other. Both methods offer their own advantages, and as a new mother it's one less worry for you!

Marie Burke works for O'Flynn Medical. They specialize in breast pumps & medical equipment for hospitals and the home environment.