

## Expressing Milk for Your Hospitalized Infant

### MUSC LACTATION SERVICES 843-792-0780

Mothers' milk provides important health benefits for infants, so whether you've decided to express milk for a short time or to breastfeed for several months, your milk is an important part of your baby's treatment plan. Many people think that giving birth prematurely limits a mother's ability to make enough milk, but this is not true. The stress, discomfort, and fatigue that go along with birth can cause a slow start with milk production. In the first few days after giving birth, mothers may make just drops of milk each time they use the breast pump, so it is easy to get discouraged. Remember, these drops are like a medicine for your baby, because they provide protection from infection. And—this slow start usually gives way to an adequate milk supply by the fifth or sixth day after birth.

### What is a “Normal” Amount of Milk?

Mothers worry about whether they are producing a “normal” amount of milk. Many things affect the amount of milk a mother produces—especially in the first few days after giving birth. A mother of a full-term breastfeeding baby produces only about an ounce of milk during the first 24 hours after birth, but by the 3rd or 4th day is making several times that amount, and frequently take a longer time to go from a few drops to an ounce or more at a pumping. Ideally, by the end of the first week of pumping, you'll be producing at least 300cc of milk each day. And by the end of two weeks you should be producing at least 500cc. This is the amount of milk that your baby will need at the time of hospital discharge. Thereafter, you will want to maintain or even increase this amount so that you have enough milk to feed your baby after hospital discharge.

### How often should I pump?

During the first week or two of milk expression you should try to pump at least 6 times a day or as frequently as 8-10 times daily if you are able—about as often as a healthy, full-term baby would feed at the breast in the early days after birth. The purpose is to stimulate prolactin during the time your body is beginning to make milk in plentiful amounts. While you may get only drops of milk at first, frequent pumping is important in building a good, long-lasting milk supply. You may not see the results of your pumping immediately, but your efforts should pay off toward the end of the first week of milk expression. You may want to call the nursery, check in on your baby, and use the pump before going to bed and again if you wake up at night to pump. If you pump less than 5 times a day, you risk losing your milk supply.

### How long should I pump?

In the first few days after birth, a pumping session should last 5-15 minutes, which is enough time to stimulate the release of prolactin. However, after your milk has “come in” several days later, and you produce more than half an ounce at each expression, you should pump the breast for 20 minutes or until your milk has stopped flowing for at least 1-2 minutes. The last droplets of milk released during pumping contain very high levels of fat, which provides most of the calories in your milk. If you stop pumping after 10-15 minutes while your milk is still flowing, your baby may not receive these valuable fat calories. Also, your breasts need to be emptied as much as possible—meaning that milk flow has stopped—otherwise your body thinks that the milk left in the breasts isn't needed, and less will be produced. A few mothers say that the milk never “stops” flowing while they pump. As a general rule, you should not pump for more than 30 minutes, even if milk continues to flow. Also, if you pump for this long at each milk expression, you do not need to pump as frequently as a mother who can express her breasts in less time.

### Can I Do Anything to Increase my Milk Supply?

Fatigue, pain, and stress, all of which are common among mothers, cause the body to release a substance that interferes with prolactin. While it may be difficult for you to overcome all of these barriers, most of these do diminish or become more manageable over time. Some things have been shown to increase the milk supply. First, try to spend as much time in the nursery with your baby as possible during these early days, if that is where you are the most relaxed. Family members often feel that mothers should stay at home and rest, but mothers report that being separated from their babies causes even greater stress. A good time to pump is after visiting your baby in the nursery. If your baby's condition permits, ask to hold your baby in Kangaroo—or skin-to-skin—Care. Don't be afraid to take pain medications that your doctor has prescribed. These medications can be used safely with breastfeeding, and pain relief is important to milk production. In some instances, prescription medications may be used to stimulate prolactin and increase the milk supply. Typically these medications are used after the second week of lactation, and require a prescription from your obstetrical care provider or lactation consultant.

### CREDITS

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### PUMPING RECORD

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Baby's birth date \_\_\_\_\_ Gestational age at delivery \_\_\_\_\_ Last weight \_\_\_\_\_

| Date | Number | Time | Duration | Amount | 24 hour total | Comments |  | Date | Number | Time | Duration | Amount | 24 hour total | Comments |
|------|--------|------|----------|--------|---------------|----------|--|------|--------|------|----------|--------|---------------|----------|
|      | 1      |      |          |        |               |          |  |      | 1      |      |          |        |               |          |
|      | 2      |      |          |        |               |          |  |      | 2      |      |          |        |               |          |
|      | 3      |      |          |        |               |          |  |      | 3      |      |          |        |               |          |
|      | 4      |      |          |        |               |          |  |      | 4      |      |          |        |               |          |
|      | 5      |      |          |        |               |          |  |      | 5      |      |          |        |               |          |
|      | 6      |      |          |        |               |          |  |      | 6      |      |          |        |               |          |
|      | 7      |      |          |        |               |          |  |      | 7      |      |          |        |               |          |
|      | 8      |      |          |        |               |          |  |      | 8      |      |          |        |               |          |
|      | 9      |      |          |        |               |          |  |      | 9      |      |          |        |               |          |
|      | 10     |      |          |        |               |          |  |      | 10     |      |          |        |               |          |
|      | 1      |      |          |        |               |          |  |      | 1      |      |          |        |               |          |
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