

When to Pump

When you should pump depends on what your goal in pumping is.

Increasing supply

The best time to pump when you are trying to increase your milk supply is within 30 minutes of feeding your baby from your body. Your baby will increase your Prolactin levels when feeding, and then if you pump within 30 minutes, you are pushing your Prolactin levels higher and demanding more milk.

If you are not feeding your baby from your body, use the tips on my “Maximizing Pumping” handout. The most important thing is to pump consistently and at least every 3-4 hours.

Building a stash

I suggest that parents start building a milk stash in their freezer around a month before returning to work. The best times to pump are after the first morning feeding from your body, and possibly at night before you go to bed.

Milk supply is always highest in the morning due to Prolactin peaks, so you may be able to feed your baby and pump after that for extra milk. If your baby is sleeping well at night, you may be able to pump at night when your baby is asleep for a longer stretch.

Offering bottles for familiarity

Pump around the time that baby gets a bottle and keep that milk in the refrigerator for the next bottle. Continue in that pattern every time the baby gets a bottle, ideally for two feedings per week, starting at week 6.

Bottles for infrequent use

If you are not concerned about your baby taking bottles long term, but have a day that you are going to be away from baby and need the option to give a bottle, then you can use the tips above to pump once that morning to have enough extra milk for that day. Or you can use a milk catcher like Haakaa or Elvie Catch to collect milk during feedings to build up one bottle.

Starting Bottles

Types of Bottles

My favorite bottles are Dr. Brown's standard neck, Lansinoh, Pigeon, and Evenflo Feeding Balance.

A gradual slope nipple is important to allow a baby to latch deeply onto the bottle.

Start with a slow-flow bottle so that the baby will not prefer a faster flow from the breast.

Responsive bottle feeding

- Start with your baby positioned upright, or lying on their side. Either way, the bottle should be horizontal.
- Gently rest the bottle nipple on your baby's upper lip, and wait for them to open their mouth to latch.
- Start with the bottle tipped so that the milk won't immediately start flowing. While holding the bottle down, twist the bottle to flange their lips on the nipple.
- Once the baby sucks 5-6 times without getting milk, lift the bottle to start the flow.
- Hold the bottle so that the nipple is 2/3 full of milk and 1/3 full of air.
- Babies naturally take breaks while nursing or feeding from a bottle. When your baby takes a breathing break, tip the base of the bottle downward to stop the milk flow.
- If you notice your baby is leaking milk from their mouth, or their eyes are wide open in an expression of surprise, the flow is probably too fast. Respond by adjusting the angle of the bottle to slow or pause the flow and give your baby a break.
- Anytime you take a break, repeat the steps above to give your baby the option to show that they would like to continue feeding.

Burping

It can be important to burp when bottle-feeding. Burps are caused by air being breathed in through the baby's nose. If the baby is breathing hard during a bottle feeding, they may swallow some of that air that they're breathing in. If we burp a baby fairly often, it gives them the chance to get the air bubbles out and to make space in their stomach for more milk, or recognize fullness. This keeps them from overeating.