

Breast Pumps

Breast pumps are medical devices frequently used by breastfeeding women to extract or express their breast milk.

Many women find it convenient, or even necessary, to use a breast pump to express and store their breast milk once they have returned to work, are traveling or are otherwise separated from their baby. Women are often delighted to learn that a breast pump can be used as a supplement to breastfeeding and that some pumps are designed to mimic the suckling of a nursing baby.

Types

There are three basic types of breast pumps.

Manual pumps

Many manual breast pumps use a system of two cylinders to create suction. Once the breast-shield is placed over the nipple and areola, a small cylinder-shaped tube is pumped in and out of a larger cylinder to create a vacuum that expresses milk and collects it in an attached container.

Some manual pumps have a handle or lever that is squeezed to create suction and express milk from the breast. The breast milk is then collected in an attached container.

Another type of manual pump is referred to as a bicycle horn pump and consists of a hollow rubber ball attached to a breast-shield. One of the earliest breast pump designs, the bicycle horn pump got its nickname from the old-fashioned bicycle horns it resembles.

To operate a bicycle horn pump, the breast-shield is placed over the nipple and the rubber ball is squeezed and released to create a vacuum that expresses milk. Some experts discourage the use of the bicycle horn pump because they may be difficult to clean and dry.

Battery-Powered and Electric Pumps

A powered breast pump uses batteries, or a cord plugged into an electrical outlet to power a small motor that creates suction to extract milk from the breasts. One or more long plastic tubes connect the breast-shield to the motor. The motor has a control panel with a dial or switch that can control suction.

Certain types of powered breast pumps can be adjusted to create different patterns of suction. Some manufacturers claim the adjustable suction allows the user to find a setting that closely mimics her nursing baby.

It is important that women who use a powered breast pump are prepared for emergency situations when electricity or extra batteries may not be available. Having extra supplies for pumping and a backup method, such as a manual breast pump, may help a woman maintain her breast pumping schedule during an emergency.

Resources

- Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses (AWHONN): www.awhonn.org
- National Women's Health Information Center: <http://womenshealth.gov>
- United States National Library of Medicine (NLM), part of the National Institutes of Health: www.nlm.nih.gov

Some content on this page was gathered from the United States Food and Drug Administration: www.fda.gov.

Many pregnancy care items and procedures are fully covered under health insurance plans, including breast pumps. Visit HealthCare.gov for a comprehensive list: <https://www.healthcare.gov/preventive-care-women/>.

Here when you need us.

Call: 844-207-5465

Online: guidanceresources.com

App: GuidanceNowSM

Web ID: LivingME

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