

# Frequent expression

## What is frequent expression?

Expressing at least 8 or more times in 24 hours, inclusive of a night time expression which leaves a gap of no longer than 5 hours in between pumping, is frequent expression. This supports mothers to achieve required milk volumes for their infant.<sup>1</sup>

When the infant is not able to breastfeed, the mother needs to be supported to express frequently.

## Why is frequent expression important?

During the first days after birth, frequent breast stimulation through suckling or vacuum expression<sup>2,3</sup> enhances hormone concentrations and supports the closure of the cellular junctions between the lactocytes and the transition into secretory activation by 72 hours (known as milk 'coming in').<sup>4,5</sup>

If milk is continued to be removed frequently (8 or more times in 24 hours), over the next 14 days the breasts are prompted to build volume and continue milk production, enabling mothers to achieve required milk supply.<sup>1</sup>

## How to implement?

Develop / revise milk expression protocols that:

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|---|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> support mothers whose infants cannot breastfeed at all / effectively to express 8 or more times in 24 hours with a hospital-grade breast pump <sup>1</sup> | <input type="checkbox"/> ensure mothers receive education and assistance on using correctly sized breast-shields and applying breast massage before, during and after pumping <sup>7</sup> | <input type="checkbox"/> provide mothers with a pumping log to track daily expressions and milk volumes <sup>1,3</sup>   | <input type="checkbox"/> regularly educate staff on the importance and science of the milk production journey   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> recommend double pumping for a minimum of 15 minutes <sup>1,6,7</sup>  | <input type="checkbox"/> stipulate mothers are given advice on how to obtain a hospital-grade double pump for expressing at home <sup>8</sup>  | <input type="checkbox"/> provide mothers with NICU specific lactation support  | <input type="checkbox"/> address potential changes in staffing strategies which may be necessary to overcome barriers <sup>1</sup>  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> communicate to all mothers that pumping at least once between 00:00 and 07:00 is important for milk supply <sup>1</sup>                                    |  | <input type="checkbox"/> ensure monitoring of pumping records are carried out daily during the first critical 14 days, then twice per week or as required <sup>1,3</sup> | <input type="checkbox"/> provide easy access in the hospital environment to pumps, personal pump kits and collection containers in all relevant maternity and nursing wards to support frequent expression <sup>1</sup> |

## How to audit?

Strategies to measure best practice include:

- Tracking the total number of pumping sessions in 24 hours
- Recording and analysing reasons why mother is not pumping, or the frequency of pumping changed<sup>1</sup>
- Noting any required additional lactation action plans / recommendations which were implemented

Auditing records on a monthly basis:

- Highlights recent progress and can enhance motivation within the organisation to continue with quality improvement measures.
- Shows where changes are still required and allows for timely implementation of further education to staff for continuous improvements in clinical practice.
- Allows barriers to be identified and addressed.