

# Selecting a Breast Pump

Walk into a baby store and look at the wall of breast pumps. It is hard to make a decision about which one will be effective and comfortable for you!

Basic parts of a breast pump will vary from manufacturer to manufacturer.



Flange goes over the breast



Connector



Tubing attaches to a motor on an electric breast pump. In the case of a manually operated pump, a handle would be located here.



Bottle

Breast pumps can remove milk from one breast at a time or both breasts simultaneously. Of course, bilateral pumping cuts the time in half. In addition, it stimulates the hormones of lactation better.

Pumps fall into 4 basic categories:

1. Hospital grade  
Generally rental pumps used while establishing a milk supply if your infant is premature or ill
2. Personal use pumps  
Generally used by employed mothers at work
3. Battery or small electric pumps  
Generally used by employed mothers or for occasional use
4. Manually operated breast pumps  
Generally used occasionally

Consider the criteria to the right. Get referrals from your friends or ask a lactation consultant for their suggestions. There are no mandatory regulations on breast pumps so unless you get personal recommendations, it is difficult to make an informed choice about the pump you purchase.

**Purpose:** Is your infant premature, ill or do you need to be separated from your infant for any reason? Select a Hospital grade pump. If you will be working and away from your baby for 8 or more hours, select a personal use pump. If you will be using your pump occasionally, a battery, small electric or manually operated pump will be fine.

**Age and health of infant:** If your infant is a newborn and your milk supply is not well established, choose a hospital grade or personal use pump.

**Comfort:** Select a pump that has adjustable suction levels and flanges so you can adjust them to your comfort.

**Availability:** Breast pumps may be available at your hospital, from your lactation consultant or at your local baby store.

**Cost:** Pumps range in price from about \$35 to over \$300. Rental pumps range from \$1 to \$5 per day depending on the rental agreement. Purchase or rent the best pump you can afford, it will make a difference!

## Selection criteria

- Purpose
- Age and health of infant
- Comfort
- Availability
- Cost
- Ease of use
- Adjustable suction and frequency
- Adjustable breast flange
- Ease of cleaning
- Universal collection container
- Durability
- Versatile power source
- Portability
- Safety

**Ease of use:** The pump should come with clear instructions and be easy to figure out. If it is very complicated, you won't end up using it.

**Adjustable suction and cycle frequency:** You want your pump to mimic the typical suction patterns of a baby at the breast. Therefore the suction range should be adjustable up to about 240 mm Hg and cycle about 48-50 times per minute. Breast pump packages are not labeled with this information at this time.

**Adjustable breast flange:** Many pumps come with a standard size flange that fits most women. However, if you have very small or very large nipples, you will need a flange that fits you. You can tell if the flange fits you if it completely supports the areola and does not pull any areola into the flange indicating it would be too large. You can tell if the flange is too tight if the nipple is tight in the nipple tunnel, hurts or does not empty the breast completely.

**Ease of cleaning:** Check the small parts. Is it likely that small, but essential, parts could slip down the sink and be lost? Is the pump easy to reassemble? The pump should be washed with soap and water after each use.

**Universal collection container:** Most pumps will accept any standard baby bottle and it is convenient to be able to mix and match with any bottles you have handy. Others require their own particular size.

**Durability:** What kind of a guarantee does the pump have? Is it likely that you can use it for this baby and for another baby or two?

**Versatile power source:** It is useful that an electric pump can be plugged in, but also could be operated on batteries at other times. In the case of a power outage, you should be able to operate it manually.

**Portability:** Where will you use your pump? Will there be times you will need to quickly put it in your purse or wear it as a backpack? Or will you always be sitting in a designated pumping room?

**Safety:** If it is operated by electricity, the pump should be rated by the Underwriters Laboratory as safe. Check to assure it will automatically cut off at suction levels above 240 mm Hg which could damage the breast tissue.

## Resources

- FDA Breast Pump Website – Basic information on breast pumps  
<http://www.fda.gov/MedicalDevices/ProductsandMedicalProcedures/HomeHealthandConsumer/ConsumerProducts/BreastPumps/default.htm>
- Breast Pumps Direct – User review of various breast pumps  
[http://www.breastpumpsdirect.com/breast-pump-reviews\\_a/183.htm](http://www.breastpumpsdirect.com/breast-pump-reviews_a/183.htm)
- Breast Pump Comparisons – User reviews of various breast pumps  
<http://www.breastpumpcomparisons.com/category/first-years-breast-pump-reviews>
- Are Used Breast Pumps a Good Option? Issues to Consider.  
<http://www.llli.org/llleaderweb/lv/lvjunjul04p54.html>

## Major Pump Manufacturers

- Medela <http://www.medela.us/>
- Ameda <http://www.ameda.com/>
- Hygeia <http://www.hygeiababy.com/>
- Avent  
[http://www.healthcare.philips.com/main/products/avent/breastfeeding/breastfeeding\\_product\\_portfolio.wpd](http://www.healthcare.philips.com/main/products/avent/breastfeeding/breastfeeding_product_portfolio.wpd)
- Bailey <http://www.baileymed.com/>
- Simplisse <http://www.simplisse.com/>

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