



**Australian  
Breastfeeding  
Association**

# Hand expressing in emergencies

Hot water for cleaning a breast pump may not be available during an emergency. If you are exclusively expressing breastmilk, hand expressing and cup feeding will help you to safely feed your baby through any emergency.

If you can, learn to hand express before the emergency. The more you do it, the easier it will be.

## Before you begin

The more comfortable and relaxed you are, the more easily the milk will flow. Hand expressing somewhere private can help. Don't be afraid to ask emergency responders to find you somewhere to express milk.

Wash your hands with soap and water before you express. You can also wipe your hands with a disinfectant wipe or use hand sanitiser.

Hand express into a disposable plastic or paper cup. If you don't have disposable cups, use a small cup so your fingers can reach the bottom. This will make it easier to clean the cup if water is limited.

Try to relax when you express by taking some deep breaths and dropping your shoulders. You can also encourage the flow of milk by looking at your baby and thinking about how much you love them.

## Concerned about feeding your baby in an emergency?

Call the **National Breastfeeding Helpline** (free and available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week) or speak to a healthcare worker.



**1800mum2mum**  
Breastfeeding Helpline 1800 686 268

## How to hand express:

**Wrap** your fingers and thumb around your breast in a C shape, close to your areola but not touching it.



**Press** back into your breast tissue, towards your chest wall.



**Squeeze** your breast between your fingers and thumb gently, directing the pressure towards your nipple from behind.



**Relax** your hand but keep it wrapped around your breast.



**Repeat** the steps Press > Squeeze > Relax, moving your hand to a new place around your breast after every few squeezes or when the flow of milk slows.

**Swap** hands and/or breasts if your hand becomes tired or the flow of milk slows. You can do this as often as you need.

Hand expressing should not be painful. If it is, adjust what you're doing until it feels ok.