How to Hand Express Breast Milk

Sit or stand in a comfortable position in a quiet place. It is sometimes helpful to apply a warm cloth to your breasts and to lightly massage them to stimulate the flow of milk. Put your thumb on the breast above the dark area around the nipple, known as the areola, and your first finger below the nipple and areola. Support your breast with your other fingers. Gently press toward your chest wall with your thumb and finger together.

Continue to compress the breast while moving your hand away from the chest wall. This should not hurt. If it does, then you are not doing it right. Press the same way on each side of the areola in order to empty all parts of the breast. Do not squeeze the nipple itself or rub your fingers over the skin. Express one breast for 3-to-5 minutes until the flow slows down and then switch to the other breast. Then do each breast again. Change your hands when the one hand gets tired.

You can use either hand for either breast. It usually takes 20 to 30 minutes to express all of the milk. Store the breast milk in a clean, covered container in a cool place until you are ready to heat and feed it to your baby. Feed the baby using a clean open cup. Even a newborn baby learns quickly how to drink from a cup.