



Choosing and Using a Breastpump

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BLUF: *TRICARE covers breast pumps and breastfeeding supplies for beneficiaries. Servicemembers must obtain a prescription for their pump, then they can either order from a DME at no cost, or purchase a pump retail and file a claim for reimbursement. Military servicemembers should consider what type of pump will best suit their needs, including work environment, how long they plan to pump, how many babies/children they are pumping for, and portability for travel. Using a pump may require some assistance—not all people respond well to pumps, and pumps are not as efficient at milk removal as babies. Incorrect usage of a pump may cause pain or injury. A trained lactation supporter and other breastfeeding peers can help you learn how to use your pump and maximize your pumped output.*

Key Points:

1. TRICARE Coverage

- a. Getting your prescription—your PCM, OB, or your baby’s pediatrician can write your Rx. It needs to specify either manual or standard double electric pump (most parents prefer the electric!)
- b. Buying from a retailer and filing for reimbursement—Just purchase your pump from any online or brick and mortar store. NOTE that TRICARE will reimburse up to a maximum of \$312.84 (CONUS) or \$500.55 (OCONUS), including shipping costs. If you purchase a pump over this amount, you will not be reimbursed more than this amount.
- c. Ordering through a DME—Most parents prefer this method, because the DME will process your claim for you and there’s no out of pocket cost. Your TRICARE Regional Contractor can provide you with a list of approved network DME providers.
<https://www.TRICARE.mil/CoveredServices/IsItCovered/BreastPumpsSupplies>

2. Choosing a Pump

- a. Where will you be pumping? In an office, a shop, a vehicle, or in the field? Is there a designated lactation space with an electrical power source at your place of duty? Will you be going on field training exercises or TDYs where there may not be a power source? If so, you may consider purchasing an additional battery pack (not covered by TRICARE) in case you don’t have access to electricity. Many servicemembers use their prescription for a double-electric pump, but also invest in a manual pump to carry with them when traveling or in the field.
- b. Where will you store your milk? Servicemembers are responsible for storing and transporting their own milk, so you may want to invest in a small cooler with ice packs, or you may want to purchase a mini-fridge if there’s space in your workplace—especially if there are multiple lactating parents in the same unit. You also may want to pump into milk storage bags that can lie flat, rather than into large bottles, to conserve space. Check with your childcare provider about regulations and preferences for frozen milk, and milk handling processes, in order to minimize wasted milk.

3. Using a Pump

- a. How does it work? Breasts are unique, and one pump does not fit all! Make sure you have

the correct size flanges for your breasts, and that you understand how to use the different settings for your pump. In general, you want to start at the lowest setting and then turn the strength up until you find the right pressure that is effective without being painful. Pumping should NEVER hurt! Ask your lactation supporter for help if needed!

b. Overseas duty stations may require different voltage power sources. Usually the manufacturer will provide these at no extra cost. Make sure to register for all manufacturer warranties, in case of malfunction, defect, or recalls.

c. We recommend that ALL servicemembers learn hand expression, because you never know when you'll be sent to the field with no electrical source, or your battery goes dead. At the very least, lactating servicemembers can hand-express in the field to relieve engorgement and prevent mastitis and clogged ducts. See video links in Resources section.

d. Tips for increasing pumped output. Know that it takes time to settle into your new schedule and for your body to get used to the new schedule. Also, remember that your pumped output is not the same amount that your baby gets!

i. Look at a picture or video of your baby when pumping, or listen to a recording of your baby's cry or cooing sounds.

ii. Bring in a hat, blanket, or article of clothing that has baby's smell on it.

iii. Use hands-on pumping technique: breast massage and compression before and during pumping will increase volume.

iv. Pump at the same time every day, when possible. Consistency will help your body learn that this is a "milk removal" time. It may take 20-30 minutes initially to complete a pumping session, but many parents find that over time as their bodies adjust to pumping, milk removal becomes more efficient.

v. "Power-pump" to increase your pumped volume.

<https://exclusivepumping.com/power-pumping/>

e. Cleaning and Maintenance. It is important to keep your pump parts clean, however that has to be balanced against the practical limitations of your worksite. See our checklist for pump cleaning guidelines.

Resources:

- <https://exclusivepumping.com/>
- <http://www.workandpump.com/>
- <https://kellymom.com/category/bf/pumpingmoms/>
- [Military DME database](#)
- [Military Policies](#)
- Hand-Expression videos
 - a. <https://vimeo.com/291805110>
 - b. <https://vimeo.com/291806551>
 - c. <https://globalhealthmedia.org/portfolio-items/how-to-express-breastmilk/?portfolioCats=191%2C94%2C13%2C23%2C65>

References:

<https://www.TRICARE.mil/CoveredServices/IsItCovered/BreastPumpsSupplies>

https://TRICARE.mil/coveredservices/benefitupdates/archives/4_9_19_TRICARE-Updates-Coverage-for-Breastfeeding-Supplies

Please contact us at wecare@globalmilcom.org

Website: <https://www.globalmilcom.org>

Military Lactation Counselor (MiLC) Program - 53 hours of lactation education virtual training:

<https://mom2momglobal.thinkific.com/courses/military-lactation-counselor-training>