

## **Milk collectors, massagers, and manual breast pumps: Oh my!**

*An evaluation of popular lactation tools on the market*

### **Milk Collection Cups: Friend or Foe?**

Milk collection cups fall into two large buckets: passive and active. Passive collectors are ones that are made to collect leaking milk without stimulating the nipple. These often have a circular opening that the nipple is inserted into and can be placed in the bra. Active milk collectors are those that are made to suction around the nipple and have a reservoir that collects milk. Knowing the type of your collection cup is important because active collectors can stimulate milk production and can worsen oversupply. These products can be great for saving milk or preventing milk-stained clothes; however, knowing the effect these products can have on supply can be important!

### **Heated/vibrating breast massager**

Breast massagers that heat and vibrate are electronic devices marketed to help with milk let down. Heat can assist with milk let down and can work similarly to using a warm cloth. Caution should be used with vibrating devices. Similar to the effects of an aggressive breast massage, the milk ducts are very small and can become inflamed with stimulation. It is not harmful to use the heat component or to occasionally use the gentlest vibration setting, if these seem to be working for you, but I would recommend avoiding these when the breasts are engorged.

### **Manual Breast Pumps**

Manual breast pumps, also known as hand-held breast pumps, are made by a variety of companies who specialize in lactation products. These do not require electricity and are compact enough to fit in the diaper bag, work bag, or carry-on. Forgot your pump? No problem. Your pump died and you forgot the charge? No problem. Your well-timed errand run ran a little longer than expected? No problem. One downside is that you may have to pump one side at a time. Some moms even prefer the control of the suction they have with hand-held pumps. A manual breast pump is something I recommend putting on every baby registry for mom's planning to breast feed their infants.

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