

Consumer Guide to Breast Pumps – A Review of the Options

(written January 2003, partially updated January 2004: Up-to-date pump information and comparisons are available at www.breastpumpsdirect.com and many other companies that sell breast pumps. Always remember though that a company who sells something will have a bias toward the items they sell, and may not tell you about all of the options.)

It is hard to find objective comparison information about breast pumps. Most women only use one pump, so it's hard for them to comment on how effective it was. And if a woman has a bad breast pump, she may not realize it, and may blame herself.... "I guess I just don't make much milk" rather than saying "I guess this pump is lousy at expressing milk from my breasts."

I really recommend that you look at user reviews on amazon.com and anywhere else you can find them before you buy a pump. The most helpful reviews are the ones where the author says that she's tried multiple brands, and here's what worked for her.

This article is all based on research I did on the web to explore the available options for pumps. It is intended to help you choose the best pump for you. I have not used any of these pumps myself (the last time I used a pump was 9 years ago...) so all the information is based on what I found on-line. My sources for information on the pumps were: manufacturer's websites, www.BirtheadBaby.com, www.mothersbest.com, www.amazon.com and several other online companies. I was not able to find any objective consumer reports-style comparisons of the comfort and efficiency of various brands, or any studies of relative effectiveness (except the potentially biased [Avent study](#) and the [Whittlestone](#) trial which did not evaluate other pumps.) Therefore, the comments on comfort and efficiency come from the reports of users on Amazon.com.

Most often recommended low-end (inexpensive pump) for part-time pumping: Avent Isis.

Most often recommended high-end pumps for women who need to pump a lot: Medela Pump in Style.






Shopping Advice: Buy online! You will find a huge range of prices: on 1/14/04, I looked at 5 sites selling the Whittlestone: their prices were \$289, 298, 259, 263, and 259. Now, obviously, you'd also want to check how much companies charge for shipping and so on to get the best deal. Also, there are rental programs in most cities, as well as some online rental companies. Some of these companies do rent-to-own, where if you try pumping for a month and it doesn't work out for you, you can return the pump without losing too much money. But, if you like it, you can apply your rental fees to purchase.

Manual Pumps

Advantages: Inexpensive, small enough to tuck in a purse or diaper bag.

Disadvantages: In general, manual pumps will not express as much milk, or will not express as quickly as electric pumps.

Best for: Occasional pumping, < 3-4 times a week.

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| Avent Isis | Medela Manual Ease | Ameda One-Handed | Evenflo ComfortEase | Lansinoh Easy Express |
| Soft, silicone cushion with massagers that replicate baby's suckling action. You control speed and pressure. In a comparison trial (sponsored by Avent), the Isis was shown to express as much milk as the mini-electric Medela and as much as the Egnell Ameda electric pump. 2 out of 3 moms preferred the Isis to the Medela. Moms rated Isis higher than Egnell for "ease of use, comfort, and pleasant to use." Amazon reviews are very favorable, describing it as comfortable and efficient. Only complaint was durability, but | Said to be "easy to use, can pump in a variety of positions." Can hold the pump in your hand, or mount it on a table. 6 vacuum settings for comfort, auto-cycle which mimics infant suckling, and a flexible silicone shield for mom's comfort. | One-handed use. Has "flexishield" which the company says stimulates the areola. Birth and Baby's website says the flexishield has been shown to increase milk volume. Ameda website refers to the flexishield as 'non-sterile' and also offers a 'sterile' pump without flexishield. The site doesn't comment on the differences. | Vacuum adjustable, silicone cushion for comfort, easy one-handed pump. Easy to put together, and to clean. Can pump directly into Evenflo Elite bottles. User reviews on Amazon are highly critical of this product, complaining of poor suction, long pumping times, and leaking. | La Leche League website describes this as "A simple and economical way to express human milk... a complete manual pumping system. Two patented nipple adapters provide a more comfortable fit for the nursing mother. The cylinder can be used for expressing, storing and feeding of human milk." |




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| this is intended as a pump for occasional pumpers. | | | | |
| \$45 | \$45 | \$30 | \$30 | \$17 |

Battery-Operated and Electric: Convertible Pumps.

Advantages: Moderately priced, small enough to fit in a purse or diaper bag. Many battery pumps have electric adapters. Easier on the hand and wrist muscles than a manual pump.

Disadvantages: In general, may express a little more milk a little more quickly than the manual pumps. Mechanical noise can be louder than that of the more expensive electrical pumps, a disadvantage for those who hope to pump discretely.

Best for: Occasional pumping, < 3-4 times a week.



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| Medela Mini-Electric | Evenflo Battery/Elec. | Natural Comfort by First Years |
| Adjustable vacuum, autcycle to mimic baby's nursing. You don't need to press a button to release suction, releases automatically. Amazon reviewers say it is slow, and noisy. One person who'd also used the Evenflo preferred this Medela. One reviewer who's also used Avent Isis prefers the Isis. | Mimics baby's sucking pattern. Adjustable soft, silicone "horn" of pump swivels to allow for comfortable positioning. Said to be quiet. Amazon reviewers say it can get backed up and leak, and also report poor durability. | Soft textured shield for comfort and to stimulate let-down. Automatic pump and release action. Mixed reviews on Amazon. Some found the pliable shield comfortable, some said it was painful, some found the shield was so flexible that they couldn't get a good seal and good suction with it – may depend on breast size. Reviewer who had also used Medela preferred Medela. User who had also tried Avent manual preferred Avent. |
| \$80-90 | \$40 | \$40 |

Mid-Range Electric Pumps

Advantages: More efficient: in general, you can get more milk more quickly with electric pumps. Can pump both breasts at once.

Disadvantages: Bulkier, heavier, harder to carry around. (Most come with carrying cases to make this as easy as possible.) More expensive.

Best for: Moms who are working part-time or need to pump multiple times a week.




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| Nurture III | Medela Double Ease |
| Small, quiet and easy to use for double or single breast pumping. Five adjustable suction settings. User-controlled cycling (user adjusts every 2-3 seconds with a slight roll of the finger.) Good for part-time users, or as an inexpensive long-term pump option. | Autocycle nursing action, adjustable vacuum. AC or battery power. Quiet. Double pump. Aimed at part-time users. 6 month warranty on motor, 90 days on other parts. Generally positive reviews on Amazon, though a few users who had tried both said the Pump in Style was worth the |

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| Both Birth & Baby and Mother's Best describe this as one of the best values on the market. 2 year warranty. | extra money. A few Amazon reviewers report that the motor died after a few months of use. |
| \$120 without tote, 150 with | \$175 |

Top-of-the-line Electric Pumps

Advantages: More efficient: in general, you can get more milk more quickly with electric pumps. Can pump both breasts at once.

Disadvantages: Bulkier, heavier, harder to carry around. (Most come with carrying cases to make this as easy as possible.) Expensive, though they can be rented, which may be a more economical option depending on how long you plan to use one. (I would recommend that once you've picked a model, rent one for a month before buying so you know that it works for you!) Best for: Moms whose schedules take them away from baby several hours a week. Parents of sick or hospitalized babies.

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| Whittlestone Breast Expresser | Medela Pump in Style | Ameda-Egnell Purely Yours |
| The expressing mechanism works differently than most pumps. Most pumps work by suction: tugging the nipple into the pump, then releasing it. The Whittlestone uses a gentle vacuum, and has very soft foam 'collars' which cover the areola, and rhythmically massage the areola to encourage milk flow. Said to be gentle, to be 'the most comfortable' pump, and to feel most similar to a baby's suckling. In a clinical trial studying effectiveness of the expresser for relieving the pain of engorgement, results were very positive, removing excess milk painlessly; two women reported that the pump 'tickled' a little. Company's website has several testimonials by people who have tried several other breast pumps and are thrilled at the comfort and efficiency of the Whittlestone. | Double pump, Uses AC power, can also buy an adapter for your car's cigarette lighter, or a battery adapter. Can adjust vacuum suction and cycling speed. Weighs 7 pounds. Pump motor in a stylish tote bag or backpack. One year warranty on motor, 90 day on other parts. 109 reviews on Amazon, average rating 5 out of 5 stars! They report that it was comfortable to use, quick and efficient, quiet, and stylish. Note that Medela has a new version of this that came out in 2003 with "Natural Expression pumping technology." Check around for updated reviews and opinions on this. | Adjustable suction (8 settings), variable cycle setting (4 settings). Weighs 1 pound. Can run on batteries, adapter, or car adapter. Single or dual pumping. Uses Hygienikit Full year warranty. |
| \$260 – 300 | \$260 | \$230 |

A Different Kind of Pump

Whisper Wear Breast Pump: A hands-free pumping system. Soft silicone breast cups fit inside your bra. \$194 for the double pump.

Several online companies have a full description of how this pump works. One place you can find it is:

www.healthchecksyste.ms.com/whisperwear_breastpumps.htm

I have not been able to find reviews of this yet, nor talk to women who have used it, but I know lots of expectant moms who are excited about it, and have bought one, so hopefully we'll find out more as time goes on.

When considering cost, be sure to take into account that this pump requires specialized milk collection bag that are single-use. These no-spill sterilized collection bags hold four ounces. \$20 per 100 bags. (i.e. 20 cents each time you pump.)

Caution: If you do a google search for "whisper wear breast review", be aware that a lot of the website hits that come up are pretty graphic online pornography. (Why those sites chose to include that text I can't tell you....) So, if you don't want to see that, be sure to read the site description before clicking through to the site.



There is a good article on choosing breast pumps at <http://www.babycenter.com/refcap/pregnancy/pregnancygear/429.html>

[Breastfeeding Home Page](#)
[Transition to Parenthood Home Page](#)