

# Breast Pumps: Ashley Hodges, MD

## **Intro**

I'm Ashley Hodges. I am a third year OB-GYN resident at Christiana.

## **Why do you use a breast pump?**

Reasons I've used a breast pump is because I'm a resident physician. So the majority of my time away from my first son, I had to pump to be able to provide him breast milk. So reasons I used a breast pump was to keep my baby fed and healthy.

## **How often do you use a breast pump?**

In terms of number of sessions per day, it really varied depending on my schedule of the day. I pumped in total for about 13 months. And each session would be anywhere between 10 to 20 minutes depending on how much time I had and what time of day it was.

## **What types of pumps did you use and why?**

I had multiple pumps. I had a double electric breast pump which I used when I had time to have like a full pumping session that wasn't running between patients. I also ended up having two of the hands-free wireless pumps, which I used when I was rounding or seeing patients. I even delivered babies while I was pumping. How I decided on the wireless breast pumps, I ended up buying both of them. And I was looking mainly for portability and ease of use while working. And my double electric pump, I had talked to my doctor, I talked to a lactation consultant and other breast pumping moms who recommended it.

## **What are some pros and cons of different pumps?**

So I ended up I initially purchased the Elvie, which is a wireless pump that has the function of being able to use a reusable container. And I also ended up purchasing the Willow breast pump, which initially required individual bags for each use, but they now have a reusable container as well. The differences between the two that I found, the Elvie pump, I liked that I didn't have to spend money on a bag for each pumping session. And the reusable container is nice; however, it I think has a more tendency to leak. So for me I felt like while I got a lot of portability out of my Elvie pump, I did feel like I had to stay somewhat upright to be able to use it without leaking onto my scrub tops. The Willow, on the other hand, is much more, I think, resistant to leaks, but it does require purchasing the bags with each use. So I think that is somewhat of a limiting factor for some people since the pumps in and of themselves are equal in price. In comparison to my Spectra, which was my double electric pump- I think that the Spectra typically I was able to get a higher output from the pump and it was more reliable in terms of how many ounces I would get per session. I think the wireless pumps, while they allowed me to pump for a very long time, they were more likely to have some issues with suction. And I didn't always get the exact same output with the wireless pumps than my double electric pump.

## **What about proper fit and flanges?**

I think fit with pumps is really important. There are some guides you can download on the internet about trying to find the right flange size. But I always found that very difficult. It's hard to compare a three-dimensional nipple to a one-dimensional printout. I think there is some trial and error in terms of finding the right flange size. And a lot of people just assume that what comes in the box is what works for them. I think that you do need to try different sizes out. There are some, again, there are YouTube videos and different guides on the internet of finding out if your pump is the right, if your flanges are the right fit for

you. In terms of how I think, you know, you have the right fit comes down to output and comfort with pumping.

**What frustrations have you experienced with pumping?**

I think one of my main frustrations with pumping happened to do, had to do more with when in my life I was pumping. I was starting my OB GYN residency with a new baby. So a lot of my frustrations mainly came down to having time to pump and being able to fit that into a very busy new intern schedule. In terms of the pumps themselves, some of the frustrations with pumping for me came from the fact that my wireless pumps, while they were portable and helped me be able to pump for a long time, they also, they have their downsides. I often would have a short time to be able to take my pumps on and off and transfer milk into the fridge and clean the parts. And so I would often like forget to plug them back in. And then the next time I would need them, they would run out of charge. The wireless pumps, too, they-- you have to be very specific about how you assemble the pump and all of the valves and parts so that you can get adequate suction. So there was definitely frustrations when I would try to use my portable pumps to have more time to be able to get all my work done, but then I would spend more time kind of troubleshooting and trying to make the pumps work for me. So there was definitely frustration that came from some of those things.

With the Willow pump, some of the complaints that people have with it is that there's a specific way that you have to flip the pump to be able to release the bag and not lose any milk. And it is, it takes some practice. I found that I had to watch a lot of videos to be able to master the exact technique that they recommend to get the milk bags out safely without spilling any milk. I definitely- there was a lot of milk that was spilled in the process. But I think once you get the hang of it, it's manageable. With the new reusable containers that the Willow pump has I think that's less of a problem.