

Breast Pumps: Jessica Mazewski

Intro

Mrs. Jessica Mazewski, union electrician. My most important responsibility, well, two, I would say is being a wife and being a mother.

Why did you use a breast pump?

So this is going to get a little emotional for the reasons why I used a breast pump. I was in the hospital, had a C-section, struggled with high blood pressure and stuff like that- was very swollen. I had a lactation consultant in the hospital and I dealt with her a lot. She was in there multiple times every day. I was in there for four days after I gave birth. And she came to me, and she worked with me with a latch and everything like that. And she had me convinced that I had a great latch, that I was feeding the baby, and that everything was good. When we went home on the fourth day, the baby was not unresponsive, but he wouldn't do anything. He was very just like lethargic, couldn't move. I was trying to get him to latch. He wouldn't latch. He had dropped 11% of his body weight. And they released us from the hospital like that. Because on a C-section, they can drop 12 percent and it's still okay. We called Katie Madden, my lactation consultant that I had outside of the hospital, and she said give him formula. So we gave him formula, and within I would say an hour, he was responsive again. He was opening in his eyes and looking around and moving. So my goal then was to start pumping. And I pumped, and I didn't get anything out. So when I went to see Katie the next day, I was so swollen, and I had edema in my breasts that no milk had formed at all. So that whole time I was in the hospital and I thought I was doing really good and I thought I was feeding my baby- I wasn't. So he was basically starving for the first four days of his life. And he couldn't latch because his mouth was too small and my breasts were so swollen that he could not get the nipple in his mouth. So I also hadn't been moving milk for the first four days. So I was playing a lot of catch up. So I had to pump in order to get any milk out. And in order to feed the baby at all.

How often did you use a breast pump?

Well, I pumped eight times a day for the first 14 weeks. So that's a lot. So 45 minutes of active pumping plus setup plus break down. And cleaning. So eight times a day, you're basically pumping every 3-4 hours. And it takes from start to finish, let's say hour-fifteen. So that's a lot of time devoted per day to get that done.

How do you define a successful pumping session?

A successful pumping session would be, I'm not hurt. I haven't created any kind of blisters at all. And I feel empty. So your breasts kind of swell as they fill up with milk. And then there you can, they're kind of floppier when you're done. So I would call that successful. The amount matters, but it doesn't matter as well. So you can't get all caught up on how much you've actually pumped. It's just all about a feeling.

Which factors impact the success of a pumping session?

My breast are very hard to milk. So I would have to massage and heat in order to move any milk out. So it would take me about 15 minutes just to kind of start getting some out. So my pumping sessions were probably 45 minutes a piece at least. And it was a lot of heat and massage. I bought vibrators, off of Amazon and used them. I had these LaVie massagers that would heat and massage that were for breastfeeding. So I had those too. So there's a lot of impact there with that.

Describe your set-up, pumping, and clean-up processes.

So setup you got flanges, you got the valves, you got the membranes, you got the tubing, these little backflow protectors. So you gotta get all your parts and pieces together and then put them all together. You have to buy a special bra to hold them on to you. So you gotta get it in your bra. Also, I had to use coconut oil on the flanges. So between the flange and my breasts, coconut oil so that when it sucked, it wasn't creating all that friction and I wouldn't get blisters or redness or pain from that set up. And then you always forget something. You gotta walk back downstairs, get it, come back up. Once you're set up, you push go. But it's not just you're pumping and then 45 minutes later you have milk. There's like a letdown mode. So there's a mode that goes faster, it will suck faster. And then you have to set it onto like a slower mode. Because when a baby sucks, it like he tries to get the milk out and then there's a drink, right? So you're suck, suck, suck, drink, drink. So it's a dance. You have to really pay attention to whether milk's coming out because when the milk slows down or stops, you have to put it on the let down mode again and then change it over to the slow. So there's a lot of paying attention there when you haven't had sleep for a long time and you're trying to fall asleep as you're trying to pay attention as well. And then when you're done, obviously turn the machine off, break it all down, and then clean it or put it in the sink. I was lucky enough to have the resources to buy multiple sets of flanges and bottles and valves. So I had a day worth of material that I could just wash one time a day. A lot of people might not have that resource. So they have to wash every time they pump, which sucks.

Tell us about the cleaning process.

The cleaning process is hard on pumps. There's so many different pieces and, I have a dishwasher, but you're not supposed to put the stuff in a dishwasher. And I wouldn't trust it to get clean in the dishwasher either because breast milk is very fatty. There's like this film. The flanges were very easy to clean. You just wipe them, get the little hole. But the valves were very difficult. So there's like a little tube that comes in for the air tube and then a thing for the milk to go down. And then like a hole for where the duckbill sits. And it's just so many small little holes. And I had little pipe cleaners from my bottles, that I would have to get in there and do it. Eight times a day, times 1 each boob, that's 16 of those per day, that you gotta wash- not including the bottles and plus the nipples. And we were using bottles that had these like air flow protectors in them- anti-burp things. So all those pieces. It was a lot. At one point- you can't fit it all in the drying rack. So I had set up a couple of pieces of PVC with my cookie things on it. And then I will just set them all in there to dry. The whole tub was filled with bottle parts and pump stuff.

How do you know if your pump is working correctly?

I think the only way you know if your pump is set up well or not is if it's not set up well. If it's causing pain, it's not right. If you look down and just white is coming into the flange and not your nipple, it's set up wrong. You need to re-center that. The flange sizes are key. I mean, and I knew I wasn't on the right flange size when it started causing me pain and I wasn't moving as much milk. But then it was a conversation with my lactation consultant as to what size was going to work for me because my flange size also changed as I was pumping because all that edema went down and I was able to go to smaller flange sizes and had to.

How do you know which settings to use?

I figured out what settings worked for me just by trial and error. You pump a lot when you're pumping, I mean, eight times a day for 45 minutes. You just kinda learn what your body reacts to. And I was on a Facebook group of people who were exclusive pumpers. And they had suggestions as to two minutes on this setting, then three minutes on that, then two minutes on this. But I really, that just gave me the confidence to kind of play with the settings. I really didn't follow anybody else's instructions. It was just whatever worked for me.

Tell us about your documentation process.

My documentation process was pretty intense for the first two to three weeks. And I wrote down where I was having any kind of pain or lumps in my breasts, so maybe a milk duct was not getting emptied all the way. I wrote what times I pumped. Because if you don't write what time you pump, you're going to forget what time you pumped. You have to make sure, well, I had to make sure I was getting eight pumps in a day. So I could easily look- I had it broken out by days- and make sure that I got eight pumps in. Now, if you go 4 hours between 1, you can't just go three hours, you gotta shorten it up to two hours for the next one. I wrote down when I was taking lactation cookies or any kind of smoothies, any kind of pills, that kind of stuff. I didn't really keep track of how much the baby was drinking because I was hyper focused on just emptying. So my documentation process was just a lot of "Am I doing this to be the most efficient and get the most out of my body that I can?"

What types of breast pumps did you use?

I started with the Medela Pump in Style. I think all the Medela -the Medela Symphony I think is different- but the Pump in Style is just a pump with a bag. It's no different than a regular pump. I used that for a while until my lactation consultant had said something about the Spectra pump, which the Spectra has a lot more settings on it and you can make the suck longer or make the suck shorter and turn it up in intensity and turn it back down. So I was like, You know what, let me just let me just buy one. So I bought one and I fell in love with it just because there's so many different things I could do with it. And it's a different suck. It's like a ... it's not like a ... it's like a ... and that was a lot more comfortable for me and it could move my milk better. So I went with that one. I did also buy a Babybella, which is very, it's just a very small pump. It was cheap off of Amazon. But that one was scary because there's a couple of settings on it where you couldn't turn it up and then turn it down. You could only turn it up and then get to the highest and then it will cycle back to the, to the beginning. And that's scary to have something on your boobs like that. And then there was one setting where it was just a constant suck. So I used that one or two times while I was driving just because it was compact. And I bought special flanges that could just- it wasn't like a whole big setup that came out to here. It was just right here. But I couldn't use it anymore after that, I was too scared.

What are some features and frustrations of breast pumps?

One thing about the Medela that I liked was that it does not shut itself off. On the same token, sometimes you fall asleep when you're pumping and that is not the best feature to not turn off. I don't really have much other good things to say about the Medela. A lot of the other pros are just from the Spectra because I used it. There's a little light on it. So if you're going into the nursery and the baby is sleeping and that's where you pump, you can just turn that little light on and it doesn't bother the baby or anything. Or, you know, it's two o'clock in the morning, you're running downstairs, you can kinda turn the light on and find your way around with it. The Spectra is also really nice because it has the backflow protectors. So you're guaranteeing yourself that the milk's never going to go into the pump and basically cause all of your other milk to be- I don't want to say rancid, but not good. The Spectra also, I do like the, you know, you can go up and down with it. There's so many different features that you can pump- a longer suck, or a shorter suck. And the intensity can go up or down. This hole right here- fits Oreos perfectly. So that's really nice.

Well, some frustrations with using a breast pump are just how awkward it is. It's so awkward. You're pumping 8 times a day and you're trying to go visit your family and you've gotta go upstairs because, you know, it's not really different than maybe like taking out your breasts and breastfeeding, but it just feels different because it's not on a baby. So there's like, I don't want to say a shame, but maybe like a privacy component to it. So like it would always be I have to go somewhere else and do it. I did try to buy the flanges that just fit into your bra and you pump on the go. A lot of them, if you lean over too much, it'll leak out. And you can't really tell what's happening down there. So you don't know if you need to turn it

up or turn it down. I would love longer tubes on them because this thing has to be right there. And if you're trying to carry it around and you're trying to carry the baby around while you while you're hooked up, it gets really, really awkward. If I didn't have a supportive wife doing the caring for the baby while I was pumping, I would've never been able to do it. I wouldn't have been able to do it because it's so clunky and you can't do anything but pump when you're pumping really. And Tiktok, that's about it.

What advice do you have for future engineers?

There are a lot of things on the market right now that don't work or only work for a very few amount of people. I bought them. I bought it all. And I feel like sometimes people have great ideas, but maybe it hasn't been through enough of a process to reaching out to people and seeing if they can use it and it doesn't hurt them or that kind of stuff. Some of these things, you know, you're in a vulnerable state when you just gave birth and you're trying to sustain a life, right? You've created this life, and now you're trying to sustain it. And it should be this very, very natural thing, right? In my head, it's this very, very natural thing. You give birth and then you feed your baby. But a lot of times it's just not like that. And we're in this vulnerable state and we'll buy it. You say it's going to work- God dang it I'm going to buy it. But if there's products out there that haven't been tested- it can mess a mama up. It's frustrating.