



Using chest and breast pumps and lactation support equipment in medical clinics

IPAC program FAQ & guidance

Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) Program
May 2025

Last updated July 2025

© 2025 College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta



Background

The goal of lactation support services in medical clinics is to assist parents in overcoming chest and breastfeeding challenges and ensure safe and effective feeding experiences for both the parent and baby. Lactation support services may include:

- Observing and evaluating chest and breastfeeding sessions.
- Providing personalized guidance on latch, positioning and milk transfer.
- Addressing latching difficulties, nipple pain or sore breasts.
- Supporting parents using pumping, bottle-feeding or supplementing.

Purpose

This FAQ and guidance document is intended to assist physicians and medical clinic staff in:

- **Section 1.1:** Using and sterilizing chest and breast pump and lactation support equipment used during infant feeding sessions.
- **Section 1.2:** Cleaning and disinfecting chest and breast pump and lactation support equipment **not used** for infant feeding.
- **Section 1.3:** Cleaning and disinfecting newly purchased equipment for at-home patient use.
- **Section 1.4:** Education and training requirements.

CPSA's Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) Program has identified that physicians and clinic staff could benefit from additional information and considerations when using breast and chest pumps and lactation support equipment.

For assistance or more information, contact the CPSA IPAC program at ipac@cpsa.ab.ca or 780-969-5004.

1.1 Using and sterilizing pump and lactation support equipment used during infant feeding sessions

This section applies to support equipment utilized for infant feeding or any equipment that may touch broken skin.

What equipment is commonly used during lactation support sessions?

Lactation support equipment may include, but is not limited to:

- Feeding bottles
- Bottle nipples
- Reusable bottle liners
- Pump flanges
- Pump flange inserts
- Nipple shields
- Pacifiers

Is it safe to use reusable lactation support equipment between different parents and infants?

Yes, but only if the equipment is designed for multiple-patient use and has validated cleaning, disinfection and sterilization instructions as per the Manufacturer's Instructions for Use (MIFU).

In some cases, patients may need to bring certain components (e.g., a breast pump) for use in conjunction with office-provided components (e.g., flanges). Both the patient-provided and office-provided components must have validated reprocessing instructions for multi-patient use. If validation is not in place, any expressed milk must be discarded.

Note of importance: Some lactation support equipment may have inadequate cleaning or disinfection instructions (e.g., steam sanitization in a microwave bag or cleaning in a household dishwasher). These methods are designed to protect a single infant and parent within a household and do not meet CPSA's [Reusable & Single-Use Medical Device Requirements for Medical Clinics](#) for multiple-patient use.

Why isn't steam sanitizing in a microwave bag or using a household dishwasher acceptable?

- **Home-based methods lack sterility assurance:** Microwave bags and personal-use dishwashers may reduce contamination, but do not have the means to ensure sterility or meet CPSA's [Reusable & Single-Use Medical Device Requirements for Medical Clinics](#) (Section 8.10).

- **Health Canada medical device licensing:** Household dishwashers and microwaves are not licensed as medical devices by Health Canada. Household reprocessing equipment does not meet CPSA's [Reusable & Single-Use Medical Device Requirements for Medical Clinics](#) (Section 3 subsection 3.2) and is not validated sterilization equipment for use in healthcare settings.
- **Microwaves lack quality control:** The effectiveness of sterilization cannot be consistently monitored or verified when using microwave steam bags.

What are the options if steam sterilization is not available in the clinic?

- **Offsite reprocessing:** Consider using an offsite reprocessing facility, such as another clinic that follows CPSA's [Offsite Reprocessing of Medical Devices guidance](#), or a publicly funded healthcare centre.
- **Single-use disposable equipment:** If CPSA's reusable medical device reprocessing (MDR) requirements cannot be met, switch to single-use, disposable lactation equipment.

How is patient safety ensured when using lactation support equipment?

- Only use multi-patient use equipment that has validated cleaning, disinfection and sterilization instructions from the manufacturer.
- Follow the Manufacturer's Instructions for Use (MIFU). Equipment must be reprocessed according to these instructions before re-use.
- Avoid equipment that cannot be properly sterilized. If the internal components of a device (e.g., chest pumps) cannot be cleaned/disinfected/sterilized effectively, they must not be shared between patients.

What are the reprocessing requirements for chest pumps and tubing?

Follow the Manufacturer's Instructions for Use (MIFU) when reprocessing tubing. Tubing with visible moisture or milk present indicates a system failure and must be discarded and replaced.

1.2 Cleaning and disinfecting pump and lactation support equipment not used for infant feeding

This section applies to support equipment used for fitting or testing purposes. If the equipment is used for fitting or testing purposes but comes into contact with broken skin, it must be sterilized. If sterilization isn't possible, it should be single-use and properly disposed of.

When chest and breast pump and lactation support equipment is used solely for fitting or testing purposes, the expressed milk must be discarded, and the cleaning and disinfection process can follow a modified approach.

However, it's still essential to manage infection prevention and cross-contamination risks. Proper cleaning, followed by disinfection, is appropriate if the equipment has not come into contact with non-intact skin or mucous membranes.

Process for cleaning and disinfecting chest and breast pumps and lactation support equipment used only for fitting

Step 1: Pre-clean immediately after use

- **Disassemble** all parts that come into contact with the chest, breast or expressed milk.
- **Rinse** all parts under the surface of the water to remove any milk residue.

Step 2: Clean thoroughly

- Wash parts with water and detergent using a dedicated cleaning brush or low-linting/lint-free cloth.
- Brushes must be single-use or reprocessed as per the products' MIFU. Cleaning cloths must be single-use.
- Use a clean basin or sink designated for reprocessing of equipment.
- Rinse thoroughly under the surface of the water in a sink or basin designated for rinsing.

Step 3: Disinfection

Because the fitting or testing equipment will not enter a sterile body site or come in contact with mucous membranes and milk is discarded, disinfection is appropriate:

- Soak all parts with a Health Canada-approved disinfectant (1 part 5.25% bleach to 10 parts water for a minimum contact time of 10 minutes).
- The disinfectant must have a Health Canada Drug Identification Number (DIN).
- Ensure the parts come in complete contact with the disinfectant and all air bubbles are removed.

- Thoroughly rinse parts under the surface of the water in a sink or bin designated for rinsing to remove any residual disinfectant.
- Manually dry all parts with a disposable lint-free or low-linting cloth.
- Clean the exterior of the breast pump with a suitable ready-to-use disinfectant wipe following the product's MIFU.

Note: If the equipment contacts non-intact skin (e.g., cracked or bleeding nipples), devices must be discarded.

Step 4: Documentation

Documentation of disinfection of chest/breast pumps and lactation support equipment shall include:

- Disinfectant name
- Number of devices and device types being disinfected
- Who performed the disinfection
- Date
- Contact time (e.g., 10 minutes)

Step 5: Storage

- Once dry, store in a clean, labelled container (e.g., "Clean Equipment – For Fitting Use Only").
- Avoid placing clean parts directly on counters or shared surfaces.

1.3 Cleaning and disinfecting newly purchased equipment for at-home patient use

This section applies to clinics providing new equipment to patients for at-home personal use.

Process for cleaning and disinfecting newly purchased chest and breast pumps and lactation support equipment

If the clinic cannot verify that equipment has been cleaned and disinfected upon arrival from the manufacturer, the clinic is responsible for performing cleaning and disinfection as outlined on page 5, "*Cleaning and disinfecting pump and lactation support equipment not used for infant feeding*" (Section 1.2), prior to making the equipment available for home use.

1.4 Education and training requirements

Clinics must establish a policy outlining the education and training requirements for staff responsible for reprocessing chest and breast lactation support equipment, including cleaning, disinfection and/or sterilization. This policy must align with CPSA's [Reusable & Single-Use Medical Device Requirements for Medical Clinics](#) (Section 10).

The following resources are available to support your clinic in developing your policy and adhering to CPSA's requirements:

- [Requirements for using medical devices & MDR](#)
- [MDR staff training log template](#)
- [Competency assessment template for MDR staff](#)