

Maternity Services Women's and Children's Division

Antenatal Expression of Colostrum Information for Mothers-to-be

Mid Essex Hospital Services NHS Trust is committed to promoting and supporting breastfeeding as the healthiest way to feed your baby. We believe that breastfeeding should be recognised as a unique interaction between mother and baby which not only feeds and comforts but also helps prevent against infection and disease.

It is well known that exclusive breastfeeding (that means your baby has your milk and nothing else to eat or drink) for around the first 6 months has many health benefits.

Who May need to Express Antenatally:

Any expectant mother can express her breast milk from 36 to 37 weeks gestation. It is particularly useful if you know that your baby is at an increased risk of having a low blood sugar in the first few hours after birth. This can include:

- Women with diabetes in pregnancy (pre-existing or gestational)
- Infants diagnosed during the antenatal period with cleft lip and/or palate and congenital conditions
- Mothers having an elective caesarean section
- Infants with intrauterine growth restriction
- Women with breast hypoplasia
- Women with hyperandrogenesis (polycystic ovarian disease)
- Women who have had breast surgery
- Women with multiple sclerosis
- Strong family history of dairy intolerance or inflammatory bowel disease.
- Mothers with high blood pressure
- Mothers taking beta blockers (e.g. labetalol)

Breastfeeding and Diabetes:

- Babies who are breastfed are less likely to develop childhood diabetes
- It is thought that cows' milk (the main ingredient of formula milk) can trigger diabetes in some babies; this is probably more likely for your baby if you or your partner have diabetes. Therefore it is very important that mothers who are diabetic avoid giving their baby formula milk if at all possible until the baby is at least 6 months old
- If you have diabetes and are insulin dependant you may find that you need less insulin when you are breastfeeding and that you need to eat more
- If you have gestational diabetes you are less likely to go on to develop diabetes in later life if you breastfeed your baby

Patient Information

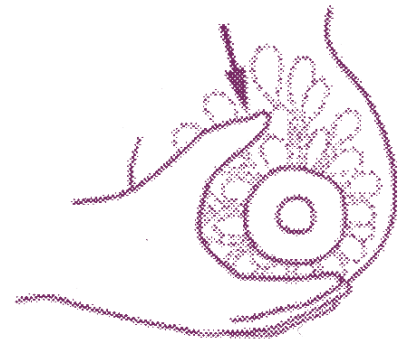
Contraindications

The antenatal expression of colostrum is contraindicated in the following circumstances:

- History of threatened/ actual premature labour
- Cervical incompetence
- Multiple pregnancy
- Cervical suture insitu

How to hand express and store colostrum in the antenatal period?

1. Start by making sure that your hands are clean and that you have a sterilised container or syringe before you start
2. Get comfortable ensuring that you are as relaxed as possible.
3. To help the milk flow it can be useful to shower or have a bath before expressing; alternatively you can use some warm cloths and gentle massage prior to expressing.
4. Feel your breast to find the right spot (usually this is about one inch or so behind the nipple).
5. Cup your breast with one hand making a 'C' shape with your thumb and the rest of your fingers
6. Gently squeeze or compress your breast and then release the pressure. Find and build up your rhythm. Avoid sliding your fingers over the skin. Milk should start to flow. Because the first milk (colostrum) is very concentrated, it is thick, and will come out of your breast drop by drop.
7. If the milk does not flow, try moving your fingers slightly towards the nipple or further away, find the spot that works best for you.
8. Keep your hands in one position until the milk flow slows. Then you should move your hands around to a different position, ensuring that all lobes are drained.
9. Aim to use both breasts, at least twice each session.
10. You can collect your colostrum 2-3 times a day.



If you wish to see hand expressing on line please visit

www.unicef.org.uk/BabyFriendly/Resources/AudioVideo/Hand-expression/

Patient Information

Storage

Expressed colostrum can be stored in the fridge (however not in the door of the fridge) for 48 hours (2-4°C)

It can be stored in the freezer for:

- 2 weeks in a freezer compartment of a fridge
- 3 months in a freezer section of a fridge with a separate door
- 6 months in the deep freeze (-18°C)

You can bring some or all of your frozen colostrum (depending on how much you have managed to express) into hospital when you are admitted for the birth of your baby. If your breast milk is frozen then the best way to transport it is in a cool bag with a blue cool block alongside it. You should hand in your expressed milk to the ward midwives on admission for storage in the milk fridge on the Postnatal Ward. Once in hospital your colostrum will be clearly labelled with your name, hospital number and the date it was removed from the freezer. In addition, defrosted colostrum should be used or discarded within 24 hours.

NOTE: You may find that when you express you find your womb going hard and relaxing- these are '**Braxton Hicks' contractions**. Don't worry about these, unless they begin to feel like period-type cramps or mild labour contractions. This is rare, but if it happens you should stop expressing and rest. If they don't stop and you think you might be in early labour, you should telephone the Labour Ward for advice.

How often can I express?

You can express your milk as often as you want to.

How much breast milk will I get?

The amount of breast milk you get will vary from a few drops to a teaspoon. This small amount is perfect for your baby as first breast milk (colostrum) is very concentrated in nutrients and helps your baby fight infections.

How to store your expressed breast milk at home

You can collect your colostrum 2-3 times on the same day and store in the same syringe. The end of the syringe should be capped off with the provided bung and kept in the back of the fridge between uses to a maximum temperature of 4°C. At the end of the day your colostrum should be frozen in a Zip lock bag. Ensure that each bag is labelled with your name, hospital number and the expressing date. Syringes can be obtained from the Specialist Midwife for Infant Feeding on 01245 513676 or 07887 636741.

Patient Information

Contacts/Further information

If you require further information regarding the evidence printed in this leaflet please contact the Specialist Midwife for Infant Feeding on 01245 513676 or 07887 636741 or refer to:

www.nice.org.uk

www.unicef.org

The Mid Essex Breastfeeding Support Line is available 9am-9pm 7 days a week on 07795 612776.

Please ask if you require this information in other languages, large print, easy read accessible information, audio/visual, signing, pictorial and change picture bank forma via the Patient Advisory Liaison Service (PALS) on (01245) 514235.



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