

Midwifery – Toowoomba Hospital

Patient information

Antenatal expressing

Antenatal expressing is taking colostrum from the breast before your baby is born. Colostrum is the first milk produced in the breast. It is a sticky fluid that may leak or be expressed from your breast, and its colour varies from clear, pale, bright yellow or orange. While only a small amount (a few drops to several millilitres), it is designed to be your baby's first food.

Colostrum helps to protect your baby against illness and allergies by lining the gut. Even a tiny amount such as half a teaspoon can stabilise your baby's blood sugar levels. Having expressed colostrum ready before birth can reduce the need for them to be given artificial baby milk (infant formula). Artificial baby milk is usually made from cow's milk and is linked with a higher chance of your baby developing allergies, diabetes, and obesity in later life.

Reasons to consider expressing colostrum in pregnancy include:

- you have diabetes (gestational or pre-existing)
- your baby has conditions that may make feeding difficult, such as cleft lip/palate, heart or nervous system conditions
- you have conditions that may cause low milk supply such as thyroid or pituitary issues, breast surgery, insufficient glandular tissue, or a history of low milk supply
- you have a family history of cow's milk protein allergy.

Expressing colostrum from 36 weeks allows you to have some milk stored to give your baby if they have low blood sugar, are unwell or unable to breastfeed for any reason. You will still have plenty of milk for your baby at birth, as expressing before birth is likely to increase your supply.

A midwife or lactation consultant can show you how to hand express, or you may choose to access a DVD or website such as:

- Hand Expression of Breastmilk with Dr Jane Morton (Stanford University)
- www.breastfeeding.asn.au

Some women may have colostrum leaking from their breasts during the later stage of pregnancy while others get little or no colostrum when hand expressing. This does not mean that you will not produce milk or that you will be unable to breastfeed your baby. If you are concerned or unsure about how to express, check with your midwife or a lactation consultant.

How to express colostrum

- Wash your hands or try expressing immediately after a warm shower.
- Gently stroke or massage your breasts and nipples using your fingertips. This will encourage a let-down response.
- Place your hands around the edge of the areola (the area of dark-coloured skin around the nipple) in a "C" shape with your thumb and pointer finger at the 12 o'clock and six o'clock positions.



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Contact ddh_design@health.qld.gov.au
for publishing information on this resource.

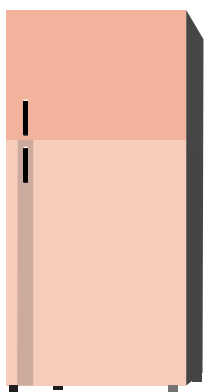
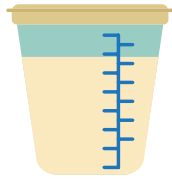
**NSQHS Standard 2: Partnering with Consumers**

We worked with our Darling Downs Health consumer group to create this resource for our communities.



**Queensland
Government**

- Gently press your thumb and pointer finger back towards the ribs then compress your thumb towards the nipple. Continue with a rhythmic, gentle press and release motion until drops of colostrum appear on the nipple.
- Collect the colostrum in a small container such as a medicine cup which has been washed in hot soapy water and rinsed, or a syringe.
- Draw the expressed colostrum into a syringe with the date you expressed recorded on it. Place syringe in a snap lock bag and store it in the coldest part of the fridge. If the amount is very small, you may add colostrum from the next time to the same syringe – see instructions about how to do this in the ‘storing breastmilk’ section below.
- Express each breast for five to 10 minutes daily. You may wish to express twice daily from 36 weeks of pregnancy. Expressing should not be painful and if you experience contractions whilst expressing, stop and speak with your midwife or doctor before continuing.



Storing breastmilk

Store the expressed colostrum in syringes in the fridge. Each syringe should be labelled with your name and the date you expressed the first lot of colostrum. If storing colostrum from two separate expressions in the same syringe, make sure both have been refrigerated and are cold before combining and freezing.

If breastmilk is to be consumed within three to five days, it can be stored unfrozen in the coldest part of the fridge for this time period. Frozen breastmilk can be stored for:

- two weeks in the freezer compartment inside the refrigerator
- three months in a freezer compartment with a separate door
- six months in a deep freezer (-18C or lower).

You will need to keep the milk frozen when bringing it to hospital and ask the midwife to put it in the ward freezer for you. Let the staff know you have milk frozen for your baby.



Any concerns?

If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to a midwife or lactation consultant. Toowoomba Hospital now has a lactation consultant service available to help with breastfeeding. Appointments can be made during pregnancy and after your baby is born by phoning 0419 610 363.

References

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