



Commencing antenatal expressing may greatly improve breastfeeding outcomes.

From 36 weeks' gestation, you may hand stimulate/express your breasts to collect and store your colostrum. Your obstetrician or nominated midwife (if you have one) may recommend antenatal expressing if you have:

- Pregestational or gestational diabetes
- A history of breast surgery
- Previous challenges with breastfeeding, such as a history of latching issues in the early days, nipple damage, nipple shield use, or low supply
- Other concerns that may impact breastfeeding, such as flat/inverted nipples or polycystic ovary syndrome

If you want to try stimulating/expressing:

- Visit your local pharmacy to purchase 10 x 1mL syringes with stoppers or caps. If volume of colostrum increases, purchase 3mL or 5mL syringes with stoppers or caps
- Collect adhesive labels from your obstetrician to apply to each syringe containing your colostrum.

How to stimulate/hand express

- Wash your hands with soap and water before handling your breasts
- Gently massage all around your breast. You may benefit from some strokes or taps around the breast – anything to stimulate the breast to release your colostrum

- Then place your thumb and forefinger opposite either side of the nipple about 3cm back from nipple base, as shown in Diagram A. Press inwards or backwards while gently squeezing finger and thumb together, repeat, and rotate fingers around the breast. This should not cause pain, just pressure
- Use a clean washed spoon or sterile syringe to collect any colostrum
- Move around the areola to express all parts of the breast
- Remember, anything new is hard to do, so keep practicing. It may take several sessions to be comfortable with this
- Express twice a day (eg once in the morning and once in the evening)
- Express for about 10 minutes in total per session, for about 5 minutes per breast
- Start with 3-5 minutes on each breast. The total time expressing when proficient should only be 5-10 minutes. If cramping pains in the uterus are experienced during expressing, please stop expressing
- Collect it first onto a spoon (wash spoon with hot soapy water and rinse well before use) or straight into the syringe, whichever is easier for you. This may be easier to do with your partner or support person. You may not see any colostrum for the first few days, or you may just see a glistening. This is perfectly normal. Continue to express and the amount you see will increase.



Diagram A: Hand expressing milk
(Reference: NSW Health Breast Feeding Your Baby 2015)



Labelling and storage

- Seal the syringe and, using the adhesive label collected from your obstetrician's room, add **your full name, the time, and the date you expressed**
- You can use one syringe to collect all your colostrum for 24 hours, but always use a new syringe for each day. If you need more than one syringe per day, ensure all are labelled
- Once you are collecting volumes >0.4ml, place each syringe into freezer within 24 hours of first using it to store the colostrum. In other words, you can store your expressed milk in the refrigerator for up to 24 hours, and keep adding to it during this time, but then it must be frozen.

If you are not able to express any colostrum after a week, speak to your nominated midwife (if you have one) at your next antenatal appointment or contact one of the Lactation Team members on 02 9650 4443, 9.00am – 3.00pm Monday to Friday.

Hospital storage

- When you come to hospital for the birth of your baby bring your colostrum with you
- Bring it in an insulated bag with a freezer brick to keep your milk frozen
- **Please hand this to the midwives on your arrival so we can put it in the freezer straight away**
- The midwifery staff will then explain the process of managing expressed breastmilk in the hospital.

Helpful resources:

- www.newborns.stanford.edu/Breastfeeding/HandExpression.html
- www.firstdroplets.com