

Antenatal hand expression of colostrum

Colostrum is:

- Milk produced by the breast during pregnancy that is perfect for your baby
- Thicker and more yellow in colour than breast milk
- Helps to protect your baby against infection
- High in energy
- Easily digested and helps with baby's first poo

Why should I hand express before my baby is born?

- Human milk is the recommended food for all babies
- Colostrum will be available for your baby after birth if your baby is unable to breastfeed
- To get breastfeeding off to a great start

Situations where antenatal expressing may be beneficial:

- Babies with a cleft lip and/or palate
- Babies with diagnosed medical condition (e.g. heart condition)
- Women with diabetes in pregnancy - as some babies need extra colostrum to keep their blood sugar level stable
- Women with little breast tissue
- Women with polycystic ovarian disease
- Women who have had breast surgery (e.g. a breast reduction or implants)

It is important to discuss antenatal hand expressing with your midwife or doctor before you start

When can I start expressing?

- After 36 weeks of pregnancy
- Start with 3-5 minutes on each breast 2-3 times a day
- STOP expressing if you have abdominal cramps (contractions)

Expressing should not cause breast pain

Please contact your health professional if you experience pain whilst expressing or you need any support

How do I hand express?



- Wash your hands
- Apply warmth to breast – this helps your milk (colostrum) to flow
- Gently stroke your breast towards the nipple to help your milk (colostrum) to flow
- Place your hand on your breast as in the picture above
- Gently press your fingers and thumb together and hold for a few seconds
- Avoid dragging your fingers on your skin, squeezing or pinching your nipple
- Repeat the action about once every second or so
- It is normal to see no colostrum or your colostrum may flow slowly

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- If you see colostrum, collect it in the clean small plastic container (BPA free) or syringe
 - Be sure to change the position of your fingers on the breast when expressing
 - Repeat on your other breast.

As a guide you may spend around 5 minutes expressing each of your breasts. Repeat both sides if you want to.

How do I store my colostrum?

- Cover the container with a secure fitting lid or if using a syringe place the provided cap on the syringe.
- Containers of colostrum need to be labelled with:
 - Your name
 - Your medical record number
 - The date and time of expressing
- Place the container of your expressed colostrum in a snap lock bag and then place it in the freezer.
- Colostrum should be collected in a new container each time you express. This is so that small amounts of colostrum are available for your baby and not wasted.
- Frozen colostrum can be stored for 3 months in the freezer.

On the day of your baby's birth

- **Bring no more than 10mls of your expressed colostrum with you when you come to hospital to birth.**
- Store the containers in a small-insulated bag with an ice-brick. Do not use ice cubes.
- Inform your midwife upon arrival that you have expressed colostrum available.
- Once taken out of the freezer, colostrum must be fed to the baby within 24 hours. Discard any unused colostrum after this time.
- **Antenatal expressing kits are available from the Antenatal Clinic or from your midwife.**

For more information on expressing visit:

- Raising Children: <http://raisingchildren.net.au/>
- Australian Breastfeeding Association: <https://www.breastfeeding.asn.au/>