

To watch a video clip on how to hand express, go to:

<http://www.unicef.org.uk/BabyFriendly/Resources/AudioVideo/Hand-expression/>

Storing your colostrum

When harvesting your colostrum, each day begin with a new syringe and after each expression place the syringe back in the fridge during that day. At the end of the day, place in the freezer.

All colostrum should be kept in their original packaging labelled clearly with your name, the date and time you expressed. Your syringes can be stored together in a freezer bag.

If you are booked to have an induction of labour or caesarean, in the 2-3 days prior to this date do not freeze the colostrum but instead put it in the fridge. This will lengthen the amount of time the colostrum can be used, as once defrosted the colostrum should be used within 12 hours. If you come into hospital in spontaneous labour it may be more beneficial to leave the colostrum in your freezer at home until required after birth, as this will prevent colostrum having to be discarded if it is defrosted for longer than 12 hours. Once you have had your baby, your birthing partner may go home to collect the rest of the colostrum you have hand expressed.

If you are admitted to the antenatal ward and are colostrum harvesting, it is best your partner takes the colostrum home to store in the freezer as we do not have a freezer available in the maternity unit. Again, if you are booked for an induction of labour or caesarean whilst admitted, in the 2-3 days prior to this, begin placing your colostrum in the milk fridge labelled with your name, date and time you expressed. This is located on Transitional Care (postnatal ward) where it can be kept until your baby requires it.

How often can you hand express?

Research shows that women can hand express up to 3 times per day after 36 weeks gestation. Aim to express for 20 minutes each session, switching between breasts every 5 minutes to increase stimulation and reduce any chances of the breasts becoming sore. Expressing your milk during the antenatal period is unlikely to cause pre-term labour as the oxytocin receptors on your uterus are not yet primed. However, if you begin to experience any abdominal cramps whilst hand expressing then we recommend that you stop and contact your midwife if they do not subside.

**If you have any questions about colostrum harvesting, please ring the
Infant Feeding Team on: 07595091974**

Colostrum Harvesting

Patient Information Leaflet



Colostrum Harvesting

Colostrum harvesting is a method used to express and store your milk from 36 weeks gestation by hand expressing

What is colostrum?

Colostrum is the first milk you produce for your baby. The colostrum helps meet your baby's nutritional needs, containing antibodies, helping to protect them from infections. To collect colostrum, you need to learn a technique called 'hand expressing'.



What are the benefits of colostrum harvesting?

- You learn how to hand express which will give you confidence to continue hand expressing after birth if you need to.
- You begin to know the anatomy of your breasts and where your milk ducts are.
- You have expressed milk ready to give your baby after birth if your baby is at high risk of hypoglycaemia or reluctant to feed initially.
- Hand expressing before birth gets your milk production off to a good start.

How to hand express in order to harvest your colostrum

1. Ensure you have a clean, sterilised container to express into.
2. When feeling your breast, work your fingers back from the nipple to where the texture feels different, this is where your milk ducts will lie.
3. Cup your breast in a 'C' shape (see picture).
4. Using your thumb and the rest of your fingers in the 'C' shape, gently squeeze down.
5. Release your thumb and fingers and repeat the action of squeezing down and releasing, this action will enable you to express your colostrum. Please avoid sliding your fingers over your breast. At first, it is normal to see only a few drops of colostrum. However the more often you hand express, the more colostrum you will produce.
6. When the milk flow slows down, move your fingers and thumb around to a different area of the breast and hand express again.
7. When the flow begins to slow again, move onto the other breast and repeat steps 2-6.
8. Keep changing breasts until the milk flow is becoming slower or stops.



Please note:

If you are unable to see any colostrum when trying to hand express, move your fingers/ thumb slightly towards the nipple or further away. You can also try to massage around the breast, this can help stimulate your milk production.