

How often should I express?

We recommend you begin **no sooner** than 36 weeks of pregnancy.

Express as often as you like, for as long as you wish; most mothers find after a bath or shower is a really good time to express.

Should you experience tightenings whilst expressing you should stop expressing immediately. If the tightenings continue or become regular or painful, contact the Labour Ward Triage on 01270 273116.

If you are leaking colostrum at any stage in your pregnancy, please do not let it go to waste. It can be collected and stored in the same manner as if you had hand expressed it.

Collection and storage of colostrum

Use a fresh syringe every 48 hours. You can keep adding to this syringe as long as it is stored in the fridge at 4 degrees or lower between expressions. Once 48 hours have passed or the syringe is full it should be labelled with your name and date of expression and then be stored in a freezer bag in the freezer for up to 6 months.

When you come into hospital do not forget to bring your supply with you using an insulated bag and ice block. We will then store on your behalf in our designated freezer.

How do I arrange to start colostrum harvesting?

Please speak to your Community Midwife to discuss beginning colostrum harvesting.

This leaflet is available in audio, Braille, large print and other languages. To request a copy, please telephone 01270 273675.



Antenatal Colostrum Harvesting

Important information for patients



For further information, please speak to your Community Midwife or Consultant Team in the Antenatal Clinic

What is antenatal colostrum harvesting?

Antenatal colostrum harvesting is the expressing of colostrum in the final few weeks of pregnancy.

For some mothers, it can be useful to help ensure that their baby will start life without the need for formula supplementation.

What is colostrum?

Colostrum is the first milk made by a mother from around 16 weeks of pregnancy in preparation for her new baby/babies.

Sometimes mothers will leak colostrum and some mothers may choose to collect this colostrum or take measures to actively express the colostrum for use when their baby is born.

The amount of colostrum varies from woman to woman and can range from nothing initially to a few drops or a teaspoonful or more.

Over the first few days after birth your milk changes from colostrum to mature milk and increases in volume.

Colostrum contains vital antibodies and helps to line the baby's gut with healthy bacteria that protect against allergy and disease. It also contains the perfect balance of proteins, fats and nutrients needed for babies as well as acting as a laxative to help the passing of the first meconium stools.

Colostrum helps to stabilise blood sugar levels in babies which is desirable in all babies but especially those babies born to diabetic mothers.

Who should consider colostrum harvesting?

Mothers who:

- have diabetes in pregnancy or otherwise
- are expecting twins or triplets
- have breast hypoplasia (limited breast development)
- are taking beta blockers to control high blood pressure
- have had previous breast surgery.

Mothers of babies with:

- cleft lip or palate identified during pregnancy
- intrauterine growth restriction
- congenital conditions, such as Down's Syndrome or cardiac complications.

If there is family history of cow's milk protein sensitivity or Type 1 Diabetes, families may be particularly keen to avoid the use of early formula supplementation.

This list is not exhaustive and if you would like to discuss your individual circumstances, please contact your Community Midwife or the Infant Feeding Lead who are happy to speak with you.

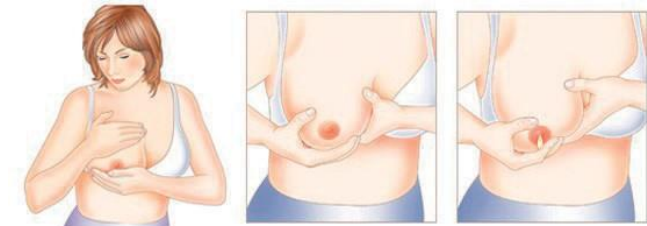
Are there any reasons to avoid expressing Colostrum in the antenatal period?

It will not be recommended if you have a history of threatened or actual preterm labour, you have a history of cervical incompetence or if you have had a suture put in your cervix to prevent preterm labour.

This is because there is a very small chance that antenatal expression can trigger labour to start.

How to express milk by hand:

- Ensure your hands are clean
- Have a clean sterilised container to hand prior to starting (syringes initially)
- Ensure you are comfortable, then gently massage your breasts for at least 2–3 minutes, this is to help release a hormone called oxytocin which in turn helps your milk to flow
- Gently tweaking and rolling your nipples can also help your milk to flow
- Cup your breast and feel backwards from the end of your nipple to the point at which the texture of the breast feels different. This is usually 2–3cms away from the nipple and does not always line up with the pigmented border of the areola



- Gently use your thumb and forefinger to compress and release in a steady rhythm
- Avoid sliding your fingers across the breast tissue
- It may take several minutes for the colostrum to come but do not worry as any time spent stimulating the milk making cells in the breast is helpful in the long term
- When the flow slows or stops move your fingers round to a different section of your breast and repeat.