



# Antenatal Hand Expressing



## Specialist Support

This leaflet can be made available in another language, large print or another format. Please speak to the Ward Manager who can advise you.





## **Antenatal Hand Expressing and how it may benefit your baby**

Colostrum is the first milk your breasts make and is the perfect first food for your baby. In addition to containing the correct nutrients for your baby it also has antibodies to help protect your baby from infections. It is produced in small quantities the ideal amount for your baby's stomach.

We know there are some instances which make it more difficult for some babies to breastfeed and that some babies may need extra colostrum in the early days. Expressing your colostrum in the last few weeks of pregnancy may benefit some babies and mothers.

### **Who may benefit from Antenatal Hand Expressing**

- If you have diabetes.
- You are taking regular labetalol.
- Your baby has a cleft lip and/or palate.
- It is thought your baby could be born small or large for his/her age.
- If you have undergone breast surgery.
- Your baby has Down's Syndrome.
- If you have previous history of poor milk production.
- You have polycystic ovarian disease and received infertility treatment.
- Your family has a strong history of dairy intolerance/cow's milk allergy or inflammatory bowel disease.
- You have a planned Caesarean section or induction of labour.
- You are expecting twins.

If any of these circumstances relate to you and you would like to consider antenatal hand expressing please talk to your Midwife. This is important to ensure there are no pregnancy related problems why it may not be advisable for you to do antenatal hand expressing.

### **When it would not be advisable to do antenatal hand expressing** **Previous premature labour.**

Threatened premature labour in this pregnancy which includes contractions, vaginal bleeding and premature rupture of membranes.



## **When and how to express your colostrum**

- Only hand express your milk. Do not use a breast pump whilst you are pregnant.
- Your Midwife will discuss the technique with you.
- You can start expressing your milk from 36 weeks of your pregnancy.
- Start hand expressing from each breast once a day for 5 minutes. Every 4-5 days increase by another episode so that by your baby's due date you are expressing up to 4 times a day for about 5-10 minutes.
- Wash your hands and do some gentle breast massage using your hands for at least 2 minutes.
- Place your thumb and your fingers in a C shape about 2-3 cm from the base of the nipple. Gently compress and release. Keep repeating. Avoid sliding your fingers over the skin. Be gentle it should not hurt.
- You may or may not see colostrum but keep going. Slowly move your fingers around your breast to try a different section and repeat. Then swap to your other breast and repeat.
- Don't worry if you haven't managed to collect any colostrum prior to having your baby, the stimulation alone helps with the flow of colostrum once you have had your baby.
- Stop if you experience any tightening's associated with hand expressing and seek advice from your Midwife.

## **Storing your colostrum**

- Store your colostrum in a syringe and label the syringe with the date, time and your name. Place in a freezer. The freezer should be - 18°C.
- Please ensure you use enteral syringes. These are syringes used for feeding.
- Colostrum expressed on the same day can be stored in the same syringe but it should be kept in the fridge between use. At the end of the day place a cap on the syringe and label with your name, date of expressing and time of freezing before placing in a freezer.



- If your baby's delivery is imminent you can store the colostrum in the back of a fridge for up to 5 days. The fridge temperature needs to be 4°C or lower.
- Visit the links below for more information on hand expressing and storing breast milk.

<https://www.gov.uk/.../off-to-the-best-start>  
[https://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/recommendations/handling\\_breastmilk.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/recommendations/handling_breastmilk.htm)



### **When you are having your baby**

When you come into hospital to have your baby place your syringes of colostrum into a cool bag and pack with frozen ice packs. Give the colostrum to the Midwife as soon as you arrive, so it can be stored in a fridge or freezer depending on when it is likely to be needed for your baby. Any frozen colostrum is best defrosted in a fridge and should be used within 12 hours of removing from the freezer. Once fully defrosted it needs to be used straight away. Any colostrum that has not been frozen give to the Midwife to be put into a fridge.

### **Information we hold about you and your rights under the Data Protection Act**

Please refer to the booklet 'Your Healthcare Information – Your Rights'! Our Responsibilities! for further guidance.

### **How to comment on your treatment**

We aim to provide the best possible service and if you have a question or a concern about your treatment then the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) are always happy to try to help you get answers you need. You can contact PALS on 0800 917 6039 or E-mail: [PHT.pals@porthosp.nhs.uk](mailto:PHT.pals@porthosp.nhs.uk) who will contact the department concerned on your behalf.

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