

# Antenatal Expressing of Colostrum



## Why should I need to express before baby is born?

Antenatal expressing is the removal of colostrum (the first milk) from the breasts before baby is born. It is a sticky fluid that may leak or be expressed from your breast and its colour varies from clear to pale or bright yellow or orange. There can be a few drops to a few milliliters.

Colostrum helps to protect your baby against illness and allergies by lining the gut as it contains a high concentration of immunoglobulins. Colostrum helps to protect your baby against illness and allergies by lining the gut, and even tiny amounts can stabilize your baby's blood sugar levels.

Having some expressed milk ready before birth provides the option for your baby to receive your breast milk in the event that you are having difficulty initially breastfeeding.

The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) recommend babies to be exclusively breastfed (they receive no other food or fluid other than their mother's breast milk) for the first six months of life.

## How to express your milk

- Wash and dry hands prior to expressing
- Sit in a comfortable upright position with a slight forward lean to help collect drops of colostrum
- Gently massage the breast in a circular motion – starting from outer aspect of the breast in toward the nipple
- Hold a clean plastic cup or container under the breast to collect the milk
- Place you thumb and forefinger approximately 2-3 cm back from the nipple, keeping the thumb in line with an imaginary line running through them
- Gently press your thumb and forefinger back towards the chest
- Then compress the thumb and forefinger together
- Repeat in a gentle rhythmical movement

- On the final collection for the day, label the colostrum container with three identifiers (Name, date of birth, UR:\_\_\_\_\_ and time of first expression for the day) and the date of expression
- At the end of the day, the colostrum should be frozen
- You can express 2-3 times per day from 36 weeks of pregnancy
- Expressing should not be painful and if you experience any contractions (either painful or not painful) stop expressing **immediately** and contact the midwife or doctor.

### How do I store the expressed colostrum?

- Store the expressed colostrum in a syringe in the fridge. If storing colostrum from 2-3 separate expressions in the same syringe, make sure both have been refrigerated and are cold before combining and freezing
- **Freshly expressed breast milk** can be stored in the coldest part of the refrigerator for up to three days
- **Frozen breast milk** can be stored for three months in the freezer section of refrigerator with separate door and six months in a deep freezer.

### How do I transport the frozen colostrum when I come to hospital?

- You will need an esky or cooler bag with an ice brick to transport colostrum
- When coming in to have baby, it is suggested that you leave your breastmilk at home and have your support person bring it in after baby is born
- Breastmilk should be used within 24 hours of defrosting.

If you have any questions or concerns, please talk to a midwife or lactation consultant.

**Phone:** 4433 3753

### Do not express if:

- you are less than 36 weeks
- your doctor has told you not to express
- you have a history of or are in threatened premature labour
- you have had/have cervical incompetence
- you have a cervical suture insitu
- you have a multiple pregnancy
- you have had any antenatal bleeding
- you experience contractions (painful or not painful) while expressing.

### References

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**All information supplied is a guide only. Seek medical advice as appropriate.**



This publication has been reviewed and approved by Townsville HHS health consumers.



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