



# Antenatal Hand Expression



Antenatal Hand Expression is removing colostrum from the breasts prior to delivery. By hand expressing prior to birth you can provide your baby your own milk to be supplemented with should the need arise. It provides the protection and nourishment that your baby needs after birth and helps your baby to maintain their blood sugar levels. Breastfeeding helps protect you from developing diabetes later in life.

**What is Colostrum?** Colostrum is the first milk the body produces and is very thick and rich. It is designed to perfectly nourish your baby. It is full of proteins, fats and antibodies that help protect the baby from harmful bacteria. Colostrum is sticky and yellowish in colour, it is easily digested and high in energy. It is also a laxative that helps your baby to pass the first bowel movement.

**Why express before delivery?** Some people are at higher risk for delayed lactation (slow milk coming in) and those babies are at higher risk for being supplemented with formula. Hand expression prior to

delivery has proven to help you have a “full supply” earlier and allows you to bring some expressed milk to hospital to use as a supplementation.

**What happens in the hospital?** At birth you and your baby should be given uninterrupted skin-to-skin time and allow time for the baby to have their first breast feed. Ideally your baby will continue to feed frequently at the breast to maintain their blood sugars but you will have the expressed colostrum as back up if you need it. You are encouraged to breastfeed and/ or express colostrum regularly after delivery until your baby is feeding effectively and your milk supply has been established.

## How to hand express?

Step 1: Wash your hands

Step 2: Gently massage and warm the breast to help to get colostrum flowing

Step 3: Make a "C" with your hand & gently press back towards the chest wall

Step 4: Compress breast between your thumb and other fingers as you gently slide forward and release



It may take many attempts before you are able to get any colostrum out. When it does start you will likely only have a few drops at a time. This can be done 2 to 3 times a day, after 36 weeks gestation. The drops collected within one day can be stored together. We will give you syringes to use to collect the colostrum in. If you are expressing more than a few drops at a time you may want to collect into a clean cup or spoon and then draw it up into the syringe.

Do not fill the syringe more than  $\frac{3}{4}$  full. Label and date the syringe with the time of the first expression that day. We will give you tips to put on the end of the syringe. Put the syringe in a labelled Ziploc bag and store it in the freezer.

You can watch a video of hand expression at this link:

<https://med.stanford.edu/newborns/professional-education/breastfeeding/hand-expressing-milk.html>

**How to transport expressed colostrum?** Keep the colostrum frozen and bring it to the hospital with you in a cooler bag, once your baby is born. Your baby will probably not need more than 20ml a day so avoid bringing more than that all at once. Once thawed it needs to be used or thrown out. There is a freezer on A6 that is accessible for patients, you need to let your nurse know that you have expressed milk that will need to be put in the freezer. If you have any questions please ask our PIPC lactation consultants.

The link will show you how to store breast milk and how long it will last

[https://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/pdf/preparation-of-breast-milk\\_H.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/pdf/preparation-of-breast-milk_H.pdf)