

Hand Expression of Colostrum Before Birth



Why Should I Bother?

It can make a big difference to your breastfeeding success. Expressing and storing colostrum **BEFORE** the birth of your baby may reduce the likelihood of your baby being given infant formula after birth. It helps boost your confidence, your supply and helps you have some on standby if there are any bumps in your early breastfeeding journey.

Am I Higher Risk for Breastfeeding Difficulties?

Things that can make breastfeeding more challenging are: First baby OR multiples * Diabetes in pregnancy * High risk for, or planning a cesarean birth * Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS) * Very overweight or obese * Low thyroid hormone * Previous breast surgery * Over 35 or under 25 years old * Poor social or emotional support * Use of assisted reproductive technologies (IUI, IVF etc.) * Having a baby with a cleft lip or palate, heart issues or conditions such as Down Syndrome * Small or preterm babies *

What is Colostrum?

Colostrum is the first milk produced by your breasts. It starts being made in the 16th week of pregnancy and continues during the first few days after the birth of your baby. Its appearance may vary from dark yellow to clear, and can be thin or thick and sticky.

Why is Colostrum Important?

It helps your baby build a strong immune system (contains antibodies and white blood cells). It creates a coating on your baby's stomach & intestines to keep germs from causing illness. It is easy to digest and helps baby pass the first bowel movement, called meconium. It also helps to feed your baby's good gut bacteria (part of a healthy microbiome) which also protects your baby from allergies and disease.

Is it Safe to Hand Express Colostrum?

Experts suggest it is safe to start hand expression after 36 weeks completed weeks of pregnancy. Please discuss with your healthcare provider to see if there are any reasons not to hand express in your case. Usually if it is safe to have sex, it is safe to hand express.

How to Hand Express

1. Wash your hands before expressing
2. Apply a warm compress first, or begin to express after a warm bath/shower.
3. Sit in a comfortable, upright position, leaning slightly forward
4. Start with a gentle breast massage, stroking from the back of your breast towards the nipple
5. Place thumb above the nipple and first few fingers below the nipple, and cup the breast in a 'C' shape
6. Start a few centimeters back from the nipple.
7. Press your breast back towards your chest, then compress your fingers together and release
8. Don't squeeze or pinch your nipple.
9. Repeat the process, building a rhythm - press, compress, release, repeat.
10. Move the position of your thumb and fingers around the areola and repeat the process to stimulate and remove colostrum from different parts of your breast
11. Hand express for a few minutes, 2-3 times a day. Use both breasts at least twice each session.
12. When colostrum drops appear, collect them with the *CLEAN medicine cup/shot glass, or spoon and then use the syringe to store your colostrum. (*Does not need to be *sterile* for a healthy term infant.)
13. Colostrum can be collected in a shot glass or medicine cup and stored, covered, in the fridge for up to four days before you collect it in the syringe and freeze it. Sooner is better. Use 1-3 ml syringes for collection.
14. Label the syringe with your name and date of expressing and freeze it
15. Take frozen colostrum with you in an insulated bag and ice pack if you are going to the hospital to give birth.

Remember that it takes time and practice. Be patient.

Watch This Video: (google) Carlington Community Health Centre Prenatal Hand Expression



References: BREASTFEEDING PROTOCOL: Expressing, Collecting, and Storing of Human Milk. City of Toronto, Toronto Public Health Division (TPH) and the Toronto East Health Network, Baby-Friendly Initiative (BFI) Strategy for Ontario. Revised Protocols are being released as they are completed, and they are available at <https://breastfeedingresourcesontario.ca/resource/breastfeeding-protocols-health-care-providers>

Ramsay Health Care; Pindara Private Hospital, Antenatal Expression of Colostrum (2011). Mater Mothers Hospital; Antenatal Expression of Colostrum (2014) <http://brochures.mater.org.au/Home/Brochures/Mater-Mothers-Hospital/Breastfeeding-antenatalexpression-of-colostrum>
<http://www.pinkymckay.com/expressing-colostrumduring-pregnancy-your-newborns-first-immuneboost/>

Advising women with diabetes in pregnancy to express breastmilk in late pregnancy (Diabetes and Antenatal Milk Expressing [DAME]): A Multicentre, unblinded, randomised controlled trial D. Forster, D. et al June 03, 2017DOI:[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(17\)31373-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(17)31373-9)