



Expressing your milk before baby arrives

Other formats

If you need this information in another format such as audio CD, Braille, large print, high contrast, British Sign Language or translated into another language, please contact the PALS desk on 01271 314090 or at ndht.pals@nhs.net.

Expressing your milk during the antenatal period

Northern Devon Health Care NHS Trust is committed to promoting and supporting breastfeeding as the healthiest way to feed your baby. We believe that breastfeeding should be recognised as a unique interaction between mother and baby which not only feeds and comforts but also helps prevent against infection and disease.

It is well known that exclusive breastfeeding (that means your baby has your milk and nothing else to eat or drink) for around the first 6 months has many health benefits.

For baby

- Protection against ear infections.
- Protection against chest infections and wheezing.
- Lower risk of diabetes.
- Protection against diarrhoea and stomach upsets.
- Lower risk of obesity.

For mother

- Lower risk of ovarian cancer.
- Lower risk of breast cancer.
- Stronger bones in later life (osteoporosis).
- Comfort your baby easily by breastfeeding.

Why should I express my milk antenatally?

Any expectant mother can express her breast milk from 36 to 37 weeks gestation. It is particularly useful if you know that your baby is at an increased risk of having low blood sugar in the first few hours after birth. This can include:

Women with diabetes in pregnancy (pre-existing or gestational).

Babies diagnosed during the antenatal period with cleft lip and/or palate and congenital conditions.

Women having an elective caesarean section.

Babies with intrauterine growth restriction.

Twins/multiple pregnancy.

Women taking beta blockers (e.g. labetalol) to control high blood pressure.

Women who have a BMI > 35.

Women who have a planned induction of labour.

Women who have had breast surgery.

Women with multiple sclerosis.

Women with polycystic ovarian syndrome.

Women with a strong family history of dairy intolerance or inflammatory bowel disease.

Any woman that wants to

It is so helpful if you have already expressed some of your breast milk, so that if your baby does need extra milk, this can be given to them instead of formula milk. The ideal time to do this is before your baby is born.

Expressing before baby is born has a positive impact on a mother's milk supply and continued ability to breast feed.

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If you have gestational diabetes you are less likely to go on to develop diabetes in later life if you breastfeed your baby.

When not to express antenatally

Antenatal expression of colostrum is not recommended in the following circumstances:

History of threatened/ actual premature labour.

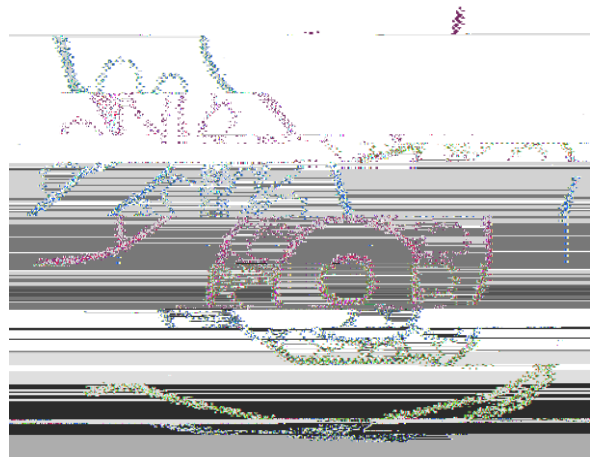
Cervical incompetence/ cervical suture in situ.

How to express your breast milk

Hand expressing milk simply means squeezing milk out of your breast and this is how you do it:

Begin by washing your hands with warm soapy water.

1. Cup your breast with your hand and feel back from the end of the nipple to where the texture of your breast feels different.
2. Using your thumb and index finger firmly squeeze this area. It should not hurt.
3. Release the pressure then repeat again and again building up a rhythm. Avoid sliding your fingers over the skin.
4. Milk should start to come. The first milk, colostrum, is very concentrated. It is very thick and will come out of your breast drop by drop.
5. If the milk does not come, try moving your fingers slightly towards the nipple or slightly further away to find the spot that works best for you.
6. When the flow slows down move your fingers around the breast (like moving around the numbers on a clock face) so that you have expressed the milk from all the way around your breast.
7. Express from the other breast.
8. If you wish to see hand expressing video online, please visit www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly/baby-friendly-resources/breastfeeding-resources/hand-expression-video/



How often can I express?

You can express your milk as often as you want to, but we would recommend 3 times a day. Express for as long as you feel comfortable. It can often take a short while for the colostrum to flow.

Videos:

Colostrum harvesting: <https://www.northdevonhealth.nhs.uk/services/maternity/infant-feeding/>

Online infant feeding workshop:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TOwGGZB9p4k&feature=youtu.be>

References

www.unicef.org.uk/BabyFriendly/Resources/AudioVideo/Hand-expression

<https://breastfeeding.support/expressing-colostrum-antenatally/>

[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(17\)31373-9/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(17)31373-9/fulltext)

Breastfeeding Answers Made Simple; A Guide for Helping Mothers, 2010, Nancy Mohrbacher IBCLC, FILCA

Colostrum harvesting/expressing your milk in the antenatal period, Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh NHS Foundation Trust

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern call 01271 314090 or email ndht.pals@nhs.net. You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at North Devon District Hospital, Barnstaple.

Have your say

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