

Antenatal colostrum harvesting

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Department	Maternity	Last reviewed	October 2018

Research shows that women that hand express in pregnancy are more confident and better prepared to breastfeed their babies.

This early breast milk is perfectly tailored for your own baby's immune system, and can be expressed from 36 weeks. The breast milk expressed can be frozen, ready for your baby after birth, should they need it.

We recommend colostrum harvesting for all women and in particular for women with special circumstances, such as gestational diabetes, twins, planned caesarean section, cleft lip or palate. Please discuss your individual needs with your midwife.

How to collect the colostrum

Colostrum is a thick and sticky milk and you may only get small quantities each time. Please ask your midwife for a colostrum harvesting pack and to demonstrate the technique of hand expression. The pack includes small syringes for collection. Start by hand expressing twice a day. Very occasionally, expressing can stimulate contractions. **If these occur, you need to stop and wait until your baby is born. If the contractions continue, phone the labour ward of the hospital that you are having your baby at for advice.**

Frimley Park Hospital – 01276 604527

Wexham Park Hospital – 01753 634520

How to hand express your colostrum

- Start by washing your hands and have your sterile syringe to hand.
- Make sure you allow enough time and that you are comfortable.
- Have 1 or 2 syringes from your pack to hand.
- Cup your breast and feel back approximately 2-3cm from the base of the nipple, to where the texture may feel different.
- Avoid sliding your fingers over the skin.
- Using your thumb and the rest of your fingers in a C shape, gently squeeze this area - this should not hurt.
- Release the pressure and repeat several times, building up a rhythm.
- At first, only drops will appear, but keep going, as it will build up your supply.
- When the flow slows down, move your fingers round to try a different section of your breast and repeat.
- When the flow slows or stops, swap to the other breast and repeat.

- If colostrum does not appear, try moving your fingers slightly towards the nipple or further away. Sometimes it can help to try a gentle breast massage.

Storing Colostrum

- Collect and store every single drop of colostrum you express. Remember, it is precious food for your baby. Every drop counts.
- Either use the syringe to suck up drops of colostrum or remove the plunger and scoop colostrum into the barrel of the syringe, making sure the stopper is placed on the other end.
- Label each syringe with your name, hospital number and date of birth as well as the date and time the colostrum was expressed and frozen. This is essential so that it can be stored and used for your baby.

Initially you may not get any colostrum or a few drops only; this is normal, do not get disheartened. Regular and continued stimulation of the breast will assist with your milk production. Remember a newborn baby's stomach is the size of a marble - so your baby will only need small amounts of colostrum at each feed.

Transporting colostrum

- Place the frozen colostrum in a cool bag with frozen ice packs.
- Bring in to the hospital only once your baby is born and only if it is needed.
- Store, while defrosting, in the milk fridge on the ward, ensuring that all syringes are correctly labeled. Only bring a few syringes at a time, as once defrosted the colostrum must be used within 12 hours.
- The ward staff will assist and support you with this and will show you how to give the colostrum to your baby.

Contact numbers for further advice

- Infant Feeding Team Frimley Park Hospital. Tel: 01276 522433
or email fhft.Infantfeedingfph@nhs.net
- Infant Feeding Team Wexham Park Hospital. Tel: 07789 270 599

Useful resources

Video clip for expressing, Unicef, www.babyfriendly.org.uk/parents/resources/audiovisual

www.babyfriendly.org.uk

www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk

www.Mothersguide.co.uk

National Breastfeeding helpline, 0300 100 0212

Please use this space to note any questions you may have

For a translation of this leaflet or for accessing this information in another format:



Please contact (PALS) the Patient Advice and Liaison Service on:

Frimley Park Hospital

Telephone: 01276 526530

Email: Palsfrimleypark@fhft.nhs.uk

Heatherwood Hospital

Telephone: 01753 633365

Email: Palsheatherwood@fhft.nhs.uk

Wexham Park Hospital

Telephone: 01753 633365

Email: Palswexhampark@fhft.nhs.uk

Email: palsfrimleypark@fhft.nhs.uk

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