

How to Store Your Colostrum

- Colostrum must be stored in purple feeding syringes with a sterile cap. These are provided by the health professional who is teaching you
- Syringes must be clearly labelled with your name, hospital RXR number, date and time expressed
- Colostrum can be stored in a fridge of 0-4 degrees Celsius for up to 5 days at home. Storing inside a sealed freezer bag is best
- Any frozen colostrum can be brought into hospital in cool bags surrounded by ice packs (to prevent defrosting)
- When you arrive to have your baby, frozen colostrum will be kept in the freezer space on the antenatal or postnatal ward, in a freezer bag and labelled

Defrosting colostrum

This is done quickly at room temperature or near to mothers' skin. Colostrum should not be re-frozen

Contact Information

If you have any questions or require further information or support please contact your Midwife on the Ward. If you are at home you can use the Antenatal Clinic numbers:

Blackburn - 01254 732925, **Burnley** – 01282 804374

Our Infant Feeding web address:

<https://elht.nhs.uk/services/maternity-and-newborn-services/infant-feeding>

Antenatal Hand Expressing of Colostrum



Why Colostrum / Antenatal Expressing is Helpful

Exclusive breastfeeding is healthy for you and your baby. Colostrum is the first milk you will make and is very protective. It helps to regulate your baby's blood sugar, protects from infection, increases bowel movements and is easy to digest.

'Antenatal hand expressing' is collecting your colostrum in the last few weeks prior to giving birth. Practising this skill may help you to get better at it and also give you reassurance that you are producing colostrum.

However, the amount obtained can vary from none at all, to a few drops, to a teaspoon full. Any amount collected will be valuable for your baby. The amount expressed during your pregnancy does not indicate how much milk you will produce after birth.

Some babies have more chance of having a low blood sugar in the first few hours after birth. An early feed, within the first hour of life will help to minimise this.

However, some babies need a little extra colostrum to help to keep their blood sugar high enough. Any colostrum expressed during pregnancy can be given at this stage to prevent the need for formula milk. Research has shown that formula milk can be a trigger for childhood diabetes.

Your Midwife may have chosen to discuss antenatal hand expressing with you for varied reasons **including**:

- They may have noticed a reason why your baby might need some extra colostrum after birth to ensure your baby's blood sugar is high enough
- Your labour is being induced
- A potential feeding challenge has been identified
- Your baby may need to spend time on our Neonatal unit

If you are unsure what that reason is please ask your Midwife

How to Express your Breast Milk

We advise that you do not start hand expressing regularly before 37 weeks unless your Midwife has advised otherwise

- Wash your hands and find a quiet space to try and relax
- Stimulate your breast (gentle massage / nipple stimulation)
- Place your first finger and thumb about 2 to 3cm back from the base of your nipple in a 'C' shape
- Compress together your thumb and finger, and release. Use a steady rhythm, without sliding along the skin
- It may take a few minutes before you start to see colostrum coming out. Collect in the sterile syringe provided. You can use the same syringe to collect for 24 hours as long as it is sterile and stored in the fridge between sessions. After 24 hours freeze the syringe in a sealed freezer bag
- If colostrum doesn't come out after a few minutes, move your finger/thumb slightly up or down the breast and try compressions again (or stimulate breast again)
- Move your fingers around the breast if necessary
- When milk flow slows/ceases after rotation, try the other breast
- Please see this video on how to hand express from Unicef. <https://www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly/baby-friendly-resources/breastfeeding-resources/hand-expression-video/>

When you express you might feel your uterus going hard and relaxing. These are Braxton Hicks contractions. Don't worry about these unless they begin to feel like period-type cramps or mild labour contractions. If this happens whilst you are at **home** you should stop expressing and rest. If they don't stop and you think you are in early labour you should ring the Birth Suite for advice. If you are in **hospital** being induced, expressing can be relaxing and help induce labour as the hormone oxytocin is released.