

Ballarat Health Services

Expressing breastmilk - Right from the Start



Congratulations on the birth of your baby (or babies). If your baby is preterm or unwell, and unable to breastfeed, here are some tips to help get a good breastmilk supply going **right from the start**.

- ◆ In the first few days after birth your breasts are producing small amounts of colostrum (from a few drops to a few mls). Colostrum is the ideal first food for your newborn baby. It is rich in protein, vitamins and minerals and has high levels of antibodies to help protect your baby from infections.
- ◆ Start expressing your colostrum as soon as possible after your baby is born - **ideally within the first hour**. Keep expressing, **at least every 2 - 3 hours**, with no longer than 5 hours between expressions.
- ◆ In the first 2 - 3 days, you can express your colostrum by hand AND with a hospital grade electric breastpump. Your midwife or the nurse in Special Care Nursery will teach you how to hand express and how to use the hospital breastpumps. Ask for help with this until you feel confident.
- ◆ For the first 2 - 3 days, use the breastpump on the **initiate** setting to increase the hormones in your body which stimulate your breasts to make milk. After using the pump, hand express for about 5 minutes each side to collect your colostrum in a syringe or cup provided.
- ◆ After the first 2 - 3 days, use the breastpump on the **maintain setting** to help your milk to flow. Ask your midwife or nurse to show you how to use this setting. You can stop hand expressing when you are using the maintain setting .
- ◆ Express both breasts at the same time to save time. Always wash your hands or use hand cleanser before expressing.
- ◆ Label your milk with your baby's milk labels (provided in Special Care Nursery) and write the date and time it was expressed. Place it in the fridge in Special Care Nursery or hand to your midwife/nurse.

