

Expressing breastmilk- right from the start

Information for consumers

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 establish your milk supply ***right from the start***.

- In the first few days after birth your breasts produce small amounts of colostrum – this might be a few drops or a few mLs. This is the ideal first food for your baby. It is rich in protein, vitamins and minerals and has antibodies to 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 8-10 times every 24 hours (2-3 hourly)** 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 breast pump. Your midwife or nurse will teach you how to express. Ask for help with this until you feel confident.
- For the first 2 - 3 days, use the breast pump on the **initiate** setting to stimulate your breasts to make milk. Expressing both breasts at the same time will save you time. After using the pump, hand express each breast for about 5 minutes to collect your colostrum in a syringe or cup provided.
- After the first 2 - 3 days, use the pump on the **maintain setting** to help your milk to flow. Ask your midwife or nurse to show you how to use this setting. You don't have to hand express after pumping when using the maintain setting.
- Collect the milk in a clean syringe or container with a lid. Label your milk with labels provided for you and write the date and time it was expressed. Store as per the guidelines on the next page or hand to your midwife/nurse to store. Special Care Nursery and the Postnatal Ward have special fridges for breastmilk. If you need to transport your milk, use a cooler bag or esky with ice.

Hand expressing your breastmilk. (Ask for help if you need it).

Wash your hands first, then gently massage your breasts for a short time. Some warmth or nipple stimulation will also help your milk to flow.

With your hand under your breast, place your thumb and forefinger about 2 - 3 cm behind the nipple. Keep your fingers well back from the nipple.

Gently press your thumb and finger back into your breast then press them towards each other, behind the nipple. Press for about 2 seconds, then release.

Continue to compress and release and your milk will begin to flow. When the flow slows down, move your fingers to another position around the areola, and start again. When the flow stops, swap over to the other breast.



Expressing your breastmilk with a breast pump

Hand pumps or small electric pumps are designed for expressing only 1-2 times a day. They are generally not recommended for mothers of small, preterm, or unwell babies who need to express frequently.

Hospital grade or good quality electric pumps are the most effective pumps for mothers of small, premature or unwell babies. Your nurse/midwife can give you information about hiring and buying breast pumps.

Using a breast pump

- Assemble your breast pump kit and place the shields on your breasts with your nipple in the centre of the shield then turn the pump on.
- Turn up the suction until it just starts to feel a bit uncomfortable then turn the vacuum back until it feels comfortable.
- Express each breast for 10-20 mins. Expressing both breasts at the same time (double pumping) will save you time.
- Reduce the vacuum if you feel pain when you are expressing and speak to your nurse/midwife if pain continues.
- When you have finished expressing, rinse your breast pump kit with cool water and wash in warm soapy water.
- Rinse off soap with clear water and dry with paper towel.
- Store your breast pump kit in a clean dry container.

Storage of Expressed Breastmilk			
Breastmilk	Room Temperature	Refrigerator	Freezer
Freshly expressed into a closed container	6–8 hours (26°C or lower). If refrigeration is available store milk there Special Care Nursery - 4hrs	No more than 72 hours. Store in back, where it is coldest Special Care Nursery - 48hrs	2 weeks in freezer compartment inside refrigerator (-15°C) 3 months in freezer section of refrigerator with separate door (-18°C) 6–12 months in deep freezer (-20°C)
Previously frozen— thawed in refrigerator but not warmed	4 hours or less (i.e. the next feeding)	Store in refrigerator 24 hours	Do not refreeze
Thawed outside refrigerator in warm water	For completion of feeding	Hold for 4 hours or until next feeding	Do not refreeze
Infant has begun feeding	Only for completion of feeding, then discard	Discard	Discard

For more information, please speak to your midwife or nurse.