

Information on feeding your baby – hand expression and cup feeding

Maternity Department
Patient Information Leaflet



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Introduction

Sometimes babies cannot latch onto your breast or they cannot breastfeed, for a number of reasons. In this situation you can express colostrum and give it to your baby.

Every pregnant woman makes milk for her baby which is ready and available at birth. The milk produced during the first few days is called colostrum and is sometimes a yellow colour. Colostrum is a very valuable source of nutrition for your baby.

Being able to hand express breast milk is a useful skill for all mothers to have. It is a skill that will be taught to you before you give birth by a health professional. It is a way of using your hands to obtain some breast milk to give to your baby.

How do I express milk by hand?

If you have decided to breastfeed, or want to give your baby breast milk, you can hand express and collect your colostrum. Hand expression can be started from 36 weeks of pregnancy and can also be performed after the birth of your baby.

The best time to hand express is when you have a shower or bath as the warmth encourages colostrum to flow. A calm, relaxed environment will also help colostrum to flow.

It is a good idea to start expressing milk for just a few minutes on both breasts and gradually increase the minutes you spend expressing each day. This should not hurt or cause labour to start. Consult your midwife if you have any concerns.

How to express colostrum by hand:

- Have a sterilised container to express your colostrum into. This could be a cup, spoon or syringe.
- Massage your breast briefly before you begin.
- Make a 'C' shape with your thumb and forefinger and place them two to three centimetres from your nipple (see figure 1).
- Gently press in and release in this area. It may take a little time for colostrum to start flowing, and you may need to adjust your fingers.
- When the colostrum stops coming out, move your fingers to a different area.

Sometimes practising this can help and you will soon be rewarded.



Figure 1 shows hand expression of colostrum

There are more details on how to hand express in the 'Off to a best start' leaflet given to you in your booking pack (see 'Can I find out more?' section). You can also discuss hand expression with a health professional.

Your hand expression pack:

You can obtain a hand expression pack from the antenatal clinic at the hospital, or ask a health professional.

The pack includes:

- Syringes
- A plastic cup
- Medicine spoons
- Labels

How do I collect and store my colostrum?

When you express colostrum, draw the drops up into a syringe or express into a sterilised container. You will need to store this in the fridge if you are going to use it that day, or freeze it straight away if not.

If you are collecting colostrum several times during a day, freeze whatever you are not going to use that day. During pregnancy, you can express up to three times in the same day. Always label the containers with the date and time of the collection (Butler and Upstone, 2012).

Do not add freshly-expressed colostrum to other colostrum that has been stored in the fridge or freezer. Use a new container.

Never store colostrum in the door of the fridge – storing it low down towards the back of the fridge is best. NICE (2008) recommend the following storage guidelines:

Storage guidelines for expressed milk (NICE, 2008)		
Where	Temperature	Time
Fridge	0-4 degrees	5 days
Freezer compartment of fridge	Not given	2 weeks
Freezer	-18 degrees	6 months

To defrost colostrum, thaw in the fridge and then use immediately.

When you come into hospital for the birth of your baby, bring your stored colostrum, labelled with your name, date and time of expression, in a cool bag with ice packs. There is a freezer to store your colostrum on the maternity unit.

If you have not been able to express colostrum before you give birth, a health professional can help you in hospital.

How do I feed my baby with a cup?

Cup feeding allows you to feed your baby without using a bottle and teat. Your baby will lap the milk from the cup and this helps to avoid nipple-teat confusion. You could also use a medicine spoon to give your baby expressed milk.

Follow these steps to cup feed your baby safely (Newman, 2009):

- Ensure your baby is awake and alert before starting the feed
- Pour some milk into a small cup
- Hold your baby close and upright on your lap, supporting your baby's head
- Hold the cup to your baby's lower lip and bring small amounts of milk slowly to their mouth. Allow your baby to take the milk into their mouth with their tongue (see figure 2)
- Go slowly, your baby will continually lap the milk

Do not pour the milk into your baby's mouth.



Figure 2 shows a baby being fed from a cup

Can I find out more?

For more information about breastfeeding, you can go to:

The antenatal breastfeeding/Mom2Mom workshop

This is held every Thursday evening at 7pm to 9pm at Russells Hall Hospital in Maternity Outpatient Department.

We also hold the following:

Grandparents' evening

This covers a range of information including feeding. This is held on the first two Mondays of each month at 7pm to 9pm.

You can book either of these by contacting community midwives on 01384 244358 (10am to 12noon, Monday to Friday).

Useful websites:

Association of Breastfeeding Mothers

www.abm.me.uk

UNICEF UK Baby Friendly Initiative

www.babyfriendly.org.uk

Breastfeeding Network

<http://breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk/>

La Leche League GB

<https://www.laleche.org.uk/node>

National Breastfeeding Helpline

<http://www.nationalbreastfeedinghelpline.org.uk/>

National Childbirth Trust (NCT)

<http://www.nct.org.uk/>

Start4life

Off to the best start booklet:

http://www.nhs.uk/start4life/Documents/PDFs/Start4Life_Off_To_The_Best_Start_leaflet.pdf

References

Butler, K and Upstone, S (2012) *Information Leaflet Antenatal Expression of Colostrum*. Glasgow: La Leche League.

Newman, J (2009) *Information Sheet Finger and Cup Feeding*. Toronto: International Breastfeeding Centre. Available at:

https://nbci.ca/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=5:finger-and-cup-feeding&catid=5:information&Itemid=17

If you have any questions, or if there is anything you do not understand about this leaflet, please contact:

Specialist Midwife Infant Feeding on 01384 456111 ext. 3887 or ask the switchboard to bleep 5050 (9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday)

Russells Hall Hospital switchboard number: 01384 456111

This leaflet can be downloaded or printed from:

<http://dudleygroup.nhs.uk/services-and-wards/maternity/>

If you have any feedback on this patient information leaflet, please email patient.information@dgh.nhs.uk

This leaflet can be made available in large print, audio version and in other languages, please call 0800 073 0510.

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此宣传单可提供大字版本、音频版本和其它语言版本，请拨打电话：0800 073 0510。

Ulotka dostępna jest również w dużym druku, wersji audio lub w innym języku. W tym celu zadzwoń pod numer 0800 073 0510.

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Aceasta brosură poate fi pusă la dispoziție tipărită cu caractere mari, versiune audio sau în alte limbi, pentru acest lucru va rugăm sunați la 0800 073 0510.

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