

Expressing and Storing Colostrum (continued)

When you first try, don't feel discouraged if you are unable to express any colostrum or only a small amount. It takes practice to get the hang of it!

If you would like some help please book an appointment with your midwife or lactation consultant who can show you the technique

Your frozen colostrum can be stored for 3 months in the freezer compartment of your fridge or 6-12 months in a deep freezer.

When you come into hospital to have your baby, bring the frozen colostrum and hand it to the staff. They will put it in the fridge/freezer in the postnatal ward.

What happens after the birth of my baby?

Breastfeed your baby without time restrictions from birth. If your baby needs extra milk you should express some colostrum and give it to your baby. If there isn't enough expressed colostrum, you can then use some of your stored colostrum.

If your baby has ongoing feeding or blood sugar control problems you will be guided by the advice of the general practitioner/obstetrician and your midwives.

Useful Contact and Information

Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA)

24 hour helpline - Ph: 1800 686 268

www.breastfeeding.asn.au

East Grampians Health Service

Lactation Consultant

Ph: 5352 9321

EGHS would like to thank our consumers
for reviewing this information.



A guide to expressing colostrum

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What is colostrum?

- Colostrum is the first milk produced by your breasts from around 16 weeks of pregnancy and in the first few days after the birth of your baby, until your milk 'comes in'.
- Australia's National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) recommends that babies be exclusively breastfed for the first 6 months of life.
- It is the ideal first food for your baby and is rich in protein, vitamins and minerals.
- Colostrum has high levels of antibodies which help protect your baby from infections.
- Colostrum is easily digested in your baby's stomach and helps with the baby's first bowel actions.

When might it be helpful?

- For many reasons, a baby may require extra fluids after birth. If they cannot receive this directly from their mother, and no expressed breastmilk is available, the baby may have to be given formula.
- Expressing and storing colostrum before the birth of your baby may reduce the need to use formula.

Diabetes

If you have diabetes in your pregnancy, your baby is at risk of having low blood sugars after birth. Giving expressed colostrum may help to stabilize your baby's blood sugars.

Other conditions (baby)

Some conditions may make it difficult for your baby to breastfeed in the early days, such as babies with a cleft lip/palate or babies with brain/spinal or heart conditions.

Other conditions (mother)

Women with a past history of low milk supply, any breast surgery, thyroid disease or polycystic ovarian syndrome.

If you think this may apply to you when your baby is born, please speak to your doctor or midwife.

Expressing and storing colostrum

Always check first with your doctor or midwife prior to expressing.

DO NOT express prior to 37 weeks of pregnancy if you are pregnant with twins/triplets, if you have placenta praevia, or if you have a stitch in your cervix to prevent preterm labour.

Ensure to stop expressing if you experience period like cramps or contractions.

There is no need to sterilize your containers. Hot soapy water and air drying is fine.

1. Wash and dry your hands and any containers you are using.
2. Gently stroke the breast, nipple and areola to help your colostrum flow.

3. Place your fore finger and thumb about 2-3 cm behind your nipple, on either side of your areola (dark area around the nipple).
4. Gently squeeze the fingers and thumb pads together, back towards the chest wall into the breast tissue for about 2 seconds, then release the pressure.
5. Your fingers should be well back from the nipple. Don't squeeze or pinch the nipple. Repeat the action in a rhythmic way.
6. When the colostrum drips easily start collecting it with the syringe or container.
7. When the colostrum stops dripping, rotate the position of the fingers and thumb around the areola and repeat the expressing actions.
8. Swap to the other breast when the flow slows down.

Start with 3-5 minutes on each breast 2-3 times a day.

Use both breasts at least twice each session.

Colostrum can be collected on the same day and stored in the same syringe. Start with a new syringe each day.
9. At the end of the collecting day place the syringe in a zip lock bag and place into the freezer. Label each syringe and the bag with your name and date of birth.