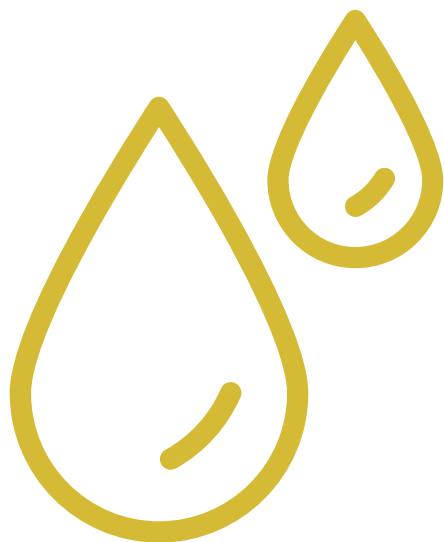


Antenatal expressing

Information for patients



Introduction

Your early breast milk is known as colostrum and that is the word that will be used within this booklet. Antenatal expressing is when you collect your colostrum during your pregnancy.

This booklet gives you important information about expressing your own colostrum before your baby is born.

NHS Fife is committed to supporting and promoting breastfeeding as the healthiest way to feed your baby. Breastfeeding is a unique interaction between a mother and a baby and has many benefits including good emotional and physical health for your baby.

Breastfeeding helps to protect both you and your baby from developing certain health conditions.

Who can express antenatally?

Most pregnant women can express their colostrum from 37 weeks gestation. Antenatal expressing is not always suitable for everyone so please discuss with your midwife before you start. However, it may be particularly beneficial for women who are having a planned caesarean section, an induced labour or who have diabetes.

How often can I express?

From 37 weeks of pregnancy, you can start collecting your colostrum 1-2 times a day, gradually increasing to 3-4 times per day.

How much colostrum will I get?

The amount of colostrum you get will vary from nothing, to a few drops leading up to a teaspoon. This small amount is perfect for your baby as colostrum is very concentrated in nutrients and antibodies to kick start your baby's immune system. Mature milk is not produced until around 3 to 5 days after the birth of your baby.

What equipment will I need?

An expressing pack will be given to you by your midwife. It will contain the following items:-

- This leaflet
- Sterilised syringes and caps to seal them
- Labels - on the label, write clearly:
 - * your own surname
 - * your CHI Number
 - * the date and time expressed
 - * if freezing the colostrum, the date and time that you froze it.

How do I hand express?

Make sure you are relaxed and take your time. Wash your hands before you start.



Step 1

Before you start to express by hand, gently massage your breast and roll your nipple to stimulate the hormones needed to release colostrum



Step 2

Position your thumb and fingers in a 'C' shape, 2cm to 3cm back from the base of your nipple



Step 3

Gently press and release, press and release, and keep repeating until you see a glisten or a drop of colostrum. This may take a few minutes. Collect the colostrum in the syringe. Don't worry if you don't get anything.



Step 4

When the drips slow down or stop move your fingers round to a different part of your breast and start again. Only try to express for a total of 3-5 minutes on each breast.

The use of a breast pump is not recommended in pregnancy for expressing colostrum.

How do I store my expressed colostrum at home?

- Colostrum can be stored in the fridge or the freezer
- A new syringe should be used for each expression
- Ensure a cap is placed on the end of the syringe following expression
- Each syringe should be labelled using the label provided
- The syringe should be placed in a freezer bag and the bag sealed
- All your stored syringes, for each 24 hour period, should be stored in the same bag.

Storing in the fridge

Store bags at the back of the fridge. Colostrum syringes can be kept for up to 5 days in the fridge (maximum fridge temperature 4°C).

Storing in the freezer

If birth is not expected in the next day or so, freeze colostrum as soon as you can. The freezer should have a temperature below -18°C.

When should I take my colostrum to hospital?

You should bring your stored colostrum when you come in for the birth of your baby (e.g. when you are in labour, or when you come into hospital for a planned induction or caesarean section).

Bring your frozen colostrum with you in a cool bag with ice packs. Inform the midwife that you have it when you arrive. Your colostrum should be clearly labelled with your name and CHI number. It will be safely stored in a fridge or freezer until it's needed. If it is frozen, defrost it in the fridge. Only defrost small amounts as needed to reduce wastage. Once defrosted, colostrum should be used within 12 - 24 hours or discarded.

When is the colostrum used?

If your baby breastfeeds successfully following his or her birth and your expressed colostrum is not required, this is great news! The time you spend expressing will not be wasted as it will give you knowledge of how to hand express and provide the body with early stimulation of the milk producing hormones.

However, if you have any difficulties feeding your baby after the birth, your baby can be given this valuable expressed colostrum whilst you both continue to learn the skills of breastfeeding. You can express fresh colostrum to feed your baby and use any stored milk instead of formula milk. Remember to ask for your stored colostrum before you are discharged, so that you can take it home again.

IMPORTANT:

You may find that when you express you feel your womb 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 you experience uterine contractions stop expressing immediately and rest. If the contractions do not stop in a couple of hours, contact the maternity assessment unit for advice.

Useful Information

The technique of hand expressing is available to view via the following web links:



NHS Health Scotland

www.healthscotland.com/documents/120.aspx



UNICEF website

www.unicef.org.uk/BabyFriendly/Resources/AudioVideo/Hand-expression/



Breast Feeding Network website

www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk/wp-content/pdfs/BFN%20Expressing%20Leaflet%202019.pdf

Acknowledgements

The Scottish Infant Feeding Advisor's Network (SIFAN).

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