



Antenatal Expression of Colostrum Information for Mothers-to-be

NHS Grampian is committed to promoting and supporting breastfeeding as the healthiest way to feed your baby. We believe that breastfeeding should be recognised as a unique interaction between mother and baby which not only feeds and comforts, but also helps prevent against infection and disease. It is well known that exclusive breastfeeding (that means your baby has your milk and nothing else to drink) for around the first 6 months has many health benefits.

Who May Need to Express Antenatally?

Most pregnant women can express their breast milk from 38 weeks. It may be particularly useful for women who have a planned caesarean section or an induced labour and birth.

How much breast milk will I get?

The amount of breast milk you get will vary from nothing, to a few drops leading up to a teaspoon. This small amount is perfect for your baby as first breast milk (called 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.

How often can I express?

From 38 weeks of pregnancy, you can collect your colostrum 2-3 times a day. Some women may wish to express more frequently than this, which is up to you. Do not be worried if there is no colostrum initially, as the hand expression will stimulate your breasts in preparation for breastfeeding your baby.

How to store your expressed breast milk at home:

Any colostrum collected on the same day can be stored in the same container/syringe. It should be kept in the back of the fridge between uses to a maximum temperature of 4°C. At the end of the day your colostrum should be frozen. Ensure that each container/syringe is labelled with your name and the expressing date.

Expressed colostrum can be stored in the freezer for:

- 2 weeks in a freezer compartment of a fridge
- 6 months in the deep freeze (-18°C or lower)

When should I take my colostrum to hospital?

You should bring your stored colostrum when you are coming 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).

Bring your frozen colostrum with you in a cool bag with ice packs and inform the midwife on arrival. Your colostrum will be clearly labelled with your name and CHI number and safely stored in a fridge or freezer depending on how soon it will be until the birth of your baby. Once defrosted, colostrum should be used within 12 – 24 hours or discarded.

Important information on reverse

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 in preference to formula milk.

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.

This is rare, but if it happens you should stop expressing and rest.

If they don't stop and you think you might be in labour, you should telephone the Labour Ward for advice.

If you require further information please speak to your Midwife or contact the **Infant Feeding Team** on **01224 551973**.

For further information about breastfeeding please refer to the following websites:
www.babyfriendly.org.uk or www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk or
www.parentclub.scot