

If you require further information please speak to your named midwife or contact the **Maternity Unit** at the Balfour Hospital on **01856 888238**.

For further information about breastfeeding please refer to the following websites:

www.babyfriendly.org.uk or
www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk or
www.parentclub.scot



Balfour Maternity Unit

Telephone number: 01856 888238

Antenatal Expression of Colostrum

Information for Mothers-to-be

NHS Orkney 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.

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 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 Balfour Maternity Unit for advice.

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 are having difficulties feeding your baby after 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.

When to start antenatal expressing of colostrum?

Most pregnant women can express their breast milk from 38 weeks by gentle hand expression, a pump should not be used at all in the antenatal period. Expressing antenatally may be particularly useful for women who have a planned caesarean section, gestational diabetes or an induced labour and birth. Your named midwife can give you an expressing pack at your 38 week antenatal appointment. The technique of hand expressing can be found in your 'Off to a good start' book.

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 concentrate in nutrients and antibiotics 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, for 3-5 minutes. 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 purple syringe. It should be capped and placed in a clear collection bag and kept in the back of the fridge between uses to a maximum of 4°C. At the end of the day your colostrum should be frozen. Ensure that each 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 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.