
What is 'Colostrum'

This is the first milk, it is small in quantity, low in fat, high in carbohydrates, protein and antibodies to keep your baby healthy. It is easily digested and helps keep your baby's blood sugars stable.

Your breasts start to produce colostrum in pregnancy and continues in the days following the birth of your baby.

Why do I need to express my colostrum before baby is born?

Learning to express and save colostrum before your baby is born has many benefits; especially if your baby is likely to have hypoglycaemia (low blood sugar) after birth or to have difficulties with feeding.

Why is it especially important for diabetic mothers?

Following the birth of your baby we will monitor their blood sugars very closely, if they drop and we have some of you own colostrum to give baby it will reduce the chance of baby needing formula.

Research suggests that any baby who is breastfed is less likely to develop childhood diabetes.

It is thought that a protein in cow's milk triggers an antibody response which can then affect the insulin producing cells in the pancreas. This is probably more likely for your baby if you have diabetes yourself.

In the first 24 hours babies of diabetic mothers are at risk of developing low blood sugars and are more likely to be given formula milk to correct this. However if you have already expressed some colostrum your own milk can be given instead reducing the need for formula.

Even if you intend to bottle feed your baby giving colostrum for the first few feeds may offer some protection against diabetes in your baby in later life. You will not be asked to breastfeed if you don't want to.

Why is it especially important for mothers taking Labetalol?

Labetalol is a drug given to mothers with high blood pressure; it dampens their production of adrenalin which raises blood pressure when stressed.

It is very important that you take this drug if recommended by your doctor, as high blood pressure is not good for you or your baby. However it does cross over to the baby in pregnancy, so when baby is born it may not make enough adrenalin to keep their blood sugars at a high enough level.

This is a very transient problem and usually corrects itself in 12-18 hours, but we will need to make sure baby's blood sugar doesn't go too low. By having some colostrum already collected it will lower the chance of baby having formula or being admitted to the Special Care Baby Unit.

Are there any contraindications to colostrum collection?

Do not collect colostrum if you have/have had:

- Previous pre term labour
- Current threatened preterm labour
- Cervical incompetence/cervical suture
- Multiple pregnancy

There is no evidence colostrum collection will bring on labour unless you are already at risk of premature labour (many women breastfeed an older child while pregnant)

What to do next?

- If you think this something you would like to do for your baby then please come and learn more and collect the equipment you will need. We run an information session at 14.00 most Friday afternoons at the Tunbridge Wells Hospital
 - The session lasts approximately 30-45 minutes.
 - **Appointments are essential**
 - **To make an appointment please phone 01892 634690**
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Further Information:

www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly (follow link to resources – audio visual)

References:

Cox, S. (2006) Expressing and storing colostrum antenatally for use in the newborn period. *Breastfeeding Review*.

Karjalainen J et al (1992) *A bovine albumin peptide as a possible trigger of insulin*. Available at: www.nejm.org

MTW NHS Trust is committed to making its patient information accessible in a range of languages and formats. If you need this leaflet in another language or format please ask one of your clinical care team or the PALS Team. We will do our best to arrange this for you.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

If you would like to comment on Trust services, have concerns or need information, you can contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). PALS will listen to your views and using a wide range of contacts and resources, help find ways of resolving any queries or difficulties. The PALS Team can be contacted Monday to Friday 10.00am to 4.00pm.

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Tunbridge Wells

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Antenatal Colostrum Collection
Information for mothers of babies at
Risk of hypoglycaemia



Midwives from the maternity unit have produced this leaflet to help you overcome some of the feeding challenges you may face in the early post natal period if your baby is at risk of low blood sugars
