

A Practical Guide to Antenatal Colostrum Collection

Information Leaflet

This leaflet has been designed to give you information on how to express colostrum during the latter part of your pregnancy.

What is colostrum?

Colostrum is the first breast milk. It is small in quantity, low in fat and high in carbohydrates, protein and antibodies to keep your baby healthy.

Colostrum is easily digested and helps keep your baby's blood sugars stable. Your breasts start to produce colostrum during pregnancy and will continue in the days following the birth of your baby.

When to hand express?

Colostrum can be collected from 36 weeks of pregnancy and expressing can be done up to three times a day.

If you are expecting **twins**, it may be possible for you to commence colostrum collection, from 32 weeks pregnancy.

How to hand express breast milk?

It helps to have short nails and to feel warm and relaxed so to begin with, try practicing in the bath or shower.

The following is a **practical guide** to collecting your colostrum:

1. Wash your hands.
 2. Massage/'stroke' your breasts for about 5 minutes to help the colostrum begin to flow.
 3. Sit up and lean forward when hand expressing; this allows gravity to assist the flow but ensures you are comfortable.
 4. Using your forefinger and thumb, walk your fingers back from your nipple to about 2.5cms or 1 inch from the base of your nipple.
 5. Place your thumb and forefinger opposite each other in a 'C' shape; keeping the nipple in the middle of your two fingers, gently press back to your chest wall and wait 4-5 seconds (this should not hurt).
 6. Then compress your thumb and finger together; **AVOID** pulling outwards or forwards when expressing as this could cause discomfort and will not help colostrum to flow.
 7. After approximately 4-5 seconds, release the pressure and keeping your finger and thumb in the same spot, repeat the action again and again (press and release, press and release) until you build up rhythm.
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8. AVOID sliding you fingers across your skin as this will cause friction and make you sore.



Diagram to demonstrate finger positioning

9. Hand express from both breasts; to begin with a maximum 10 minutes on each side – it's important that you do not cause yourself pain or discomfort.
10. Swap from one breast to the other during the 10 minute session and ensure that you rotate your fingers around the nipple; keeping your fingers in a 'C' shape so that you have stimulated and expressed from all around your breast.
11. When the flow slows down, move your fingers around your breast, keeping your thumb and forefinger opposite each other and in a 'C' shape.
12. If initially, you do not see any colostrum, don't worry, as expressing takes time and practice. Maybe try moving your finger closer or further away from your nipple to find the spot that works best for you.
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13. Once colostrum appears at the nipple you will need to collect the colostrum directly into one of the one millimetre (1ml) sterile syringes. You do this by gently pulling the plunger out of the syringe to draw the colostrum up into the syringe. It can help if you have someone to help you so that they can collect the colostrum while you express.

- This video, by our Infant Feeding Team, is very useful in showing those who are pregnant how to express colostrum: [Colostrum Collection in Pregnancy: When to start and how to do it - YouTube](#)

How do I safely store my colostrum?

You can store the syringe in the fridge until you have finished collecting that day and then put the syringe in a clean plastic container/bag in the freezer

Each syringe **must** be labelled with your name, your date of birth, the date and the time of the collection

How do I bring my colostrum with me to the hospital or the birth centre?

You will need a small cool bag and several ice blocks to transport your colostrum.

It is **vital** that your colostrum **stays frozen** to ensure it remains safe to use.

1. If you are being admitted for **induction of labour or a caesarean section**, you will be asked to report to the Antenatal Ward.

Please can either you or your partner:

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- Ensure that one of your personal hospital identification stickers (in your handheld notes) has been securely attached to the top of your container (this is extra to the labels on each syringe)
 - Attend the Delivery suite and ask the staff to place your **named** colostrum collection into the freezer. Alternatively you can also give your colostrum to a staff member on the Antenatal Ward.
2. If you are coming into **hospital in labour**, you will be asked to go to the Maternity Triage Area.

Please can you ask a member of staff or your partner/family member to take your **named** colostrum to the Delivery Suite. This must be done **immediately** in order to keep the colostrum **frozen** (and therefore safe for use).

3. If you are coming into one of the **Birth Centres in labour**, please can either you or your partner/family member give your colostrum **IMMEDIATELY** to a member of staff

It is the parent's responsibility to remember to take any collected colostrum home upon discharge from hospital or birth centre. However, we will attempt one reminder phone call to collect. If Colostrum has not been collected by one month post discharge from either the hospital or the birth centre then it will be discarded.

It is not within our trust policy to advocate syringe feeding once home due to the risk of aspiration. We recommend that you discuss with your midwife a safer way of administering the colostrum you have saved for when at home.

Please use this space to write any notes or questions you may have.

Useful contact numbers for further advice:

Infant feeding lead midwives ☎ 01892 638141

Diabetic midwives ☎ 01892 633044

Maidstone community midwives:

Email: mtw-tr.maidstonemidwifery@nhs.net

Telephone: ☎ 01622 220164

Crowborough midwives (based at Birth Centre)

☎ 01892 654080

Useful Resources:

Websites: www.globalhealthmedia.org

The relevant, visual graphic in this video can be found in the small baby section called '**expressing the first milk**'.

This begins at about 2 minutes 30 seconds into the video.

www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly
(go to the parent's section)

www.breastfeeding.nhs.uk

www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk


www.kentbabymatters.org

National Breastfeeding Helpline ☎ 0300 100 0212

DVD Department of Health - 'From bump to breastfeeding'



Further information and advice can be obtained from:

NHS 111
NHS Choices online

 **111**
www.nhs.uk

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 Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). We will do our best to arrange this.

Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust welcomes all forms of feedback from our service users. If the standard of service you have received from the Trust does not meet your expectations, we want to hear from you. Please speak with the ward manager or the nurse in charge in the first instance, or you can contact the **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)** on:

Telephone:  01622 224960 or  01892 632953

Email: mtw-tr.palsoffice@nhs.net

or visit their office at either Maidstone or Tunbridge Wells Hospital between 9.00am and 5.00pm, Monday to Friday.

You can be confident that your care will not be affected by highlighting any areas of concern or making a complaint. The Trust will retain a record of your contact, which is held separately to any medical records. If you are acting on behalf of a patient, we may need to obtain the patient's consent in order to protect patient confidentiality. More information on PALS or making a complaint can be found on the Trust's website: www.mtw.nhs.uk or pick up a leaflet from main reception.

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