

Information on Breastfeeding and Hand Expressing Colostrum (First milk) A guide for parents

This leaflet can be made available
in alternative languages / formats on request.

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Na żądanie ta ulotka może zostać udostępniona
w innych językach/formatach.

Feeding your baby

You have probably already thought about how you will feed your new baby. You will have the opportunity to discuss this with your midwife throughout your pregnancy.

We do not expect you to make decisions about this straight away. We will provide you with the best information we have to help you to make informed choices about feeding and caring for your baby.

Breastfeeding

- Research evidence shows that exclusive breastfeeding – not giving your baby any other foods or drinks for around the first six months – has many health benefits. For example, a baby who is exclusively breastfed is less likely to develop a wide range of infections such as ear, tummy, urine and chest infections
- If you have a family history of allergies, such as eczema and asthma, and your child is breastfed, he or she is less likely to develop similar allergies. Children who do develop allergies tend to develop milder symptoms, occurring later than children fed on cow's milk formula
- In addition, research suggests that exclusively breastfed babies are less likely to develop childhood diabetes. Studies show that it is the cow's milk antigen that may act as a trigger for diabetes

Hypoglycaemia (Low blood sugar)

Most babies have no difficulty in adapting to life outside the womb. However, some babies have an increased chance of developing low blood sugar (hypoglycaemia) and will be carefully monitored for a longer period.

Babies with an increased chance of low blood sugar include:

- Early or premature babies (born before 37 completed weeks of pregnancy)
- Babies who are lighter in weight than expected for the number of weeks of pregnancy (SGA – small for gestational age)
- Babies who needed help to breathe at birth
- Babies who are ill
- Babies whose mothers had diabetes during pregnancy
- Babies whose mothers have taken medicine for blood pressure (beta blockers)
- Babies who have a family history of metabolic disorders

If this applies to you or your baby, **it is important** that your baby is breastfed as early as possible after birth, and then to breastfeed often – at least every two-three hours. This will help to prevent low blood sugar in your baby. There is a separate leaflet entitled “**Protecting your baby from low blood sugar**” to advise you.

Your expressed colostrum can also be given to your baby after breastfeeds. Your baby will be carefully monitored and we will check his/her blood sugar regularly.

Colostrum

Your breasts start to produce colostrum during pregnancy and continue through the early days of breastfeeding. This special milk is yellow to orange in colour, and is thick and sticky. It is low in fat, and high in carbohydrates, protein and antibodies to help keep your baby healthy.

Colostrum is extremely easy to digest, and is therefore the perfect first food for your baby.

Expressing Colostrum

Your breasts start to produce colostrum from about sixteen weeks of pregnancy onwards. Sometimes, as early as 28 weeks of pregnancy women find that they leak colostrum from their breasts. Do not worry if you do not leak colostrum, this is not an indication that you will not be able to breastfeed. The amount of colostrum will vary from woman to woman. It can range from a few drops to as much as a teaspoonful or more.

When do I start?

A good time to start expressing colostrum would be when you reach 37 weeks of pregnancy.

If you are having an elective Caesarean section, it would be advisable to **only express in the 24 hour period before** your operation as there is a small risk that it might induce your labour.

If you notice an increase in tightening of the uterus, or contractions, you should speak with a midwife on:

0151 290 4489 (Triage - 24 hours)

How often can I express?

You can express colostrum **as often as you like**. A good time to have a first practice is when you are in the bath or shower.

How to express and store your colostrum

It helps to be warm and relaxed!

Prepare: Wash your hands and massage the breasts gently to help colostrum to flow. You do not need to drag the skin. Gentle nipple rolling may also help.

Find the right place: In order to find the right spot, cup the breast in your hand and make a “C” shape with your thumb and first finger. Feel back from the nipple until your finger and thumb are approximately 2-3cm from the tip of the nipple.

Removing the colostrum:

- Gently squeeze with your thumb and index finger, rhythmically compressing and releasing the breast
- Small drops of colostrum may appear at the end of your nipple and if you do not see colostrum, reposition your thumb and finger either forwards or backwards on your breast and try again
- Move your thumb and finger around your breast and repeat the process to ensure stimulation and drainage of the whole breast
- You may need to swap hands to express colostrum from the other side of the same breast
- Continue the rhythm until the drips stop. When the flow completely subsides, move to the other breast
- Do not be disheartened if you do not see any colostrum on your first attempt.



Collecting the Colostrum

- We will give you the equipment needed for collecting and storing your colostrum. These will be small sterile syringes with caps which you can use to collect the colostrum directly from your nipple. When you have finished collecting colostrum carefully replace the cap, label the syringe with the date it was expressed and place the syringe at the back of the fridge
- The amount of colostrum varies from woman to woman. It can range from a few drops to as much as a teaspoonful or more
- If you prefer, you can collect your colostrum directly into a small, clean container. If you are going to express more than once a day, then you can put the covered container in the coldest part of the fridge (usually the back of the fridge) and add to it later in the day

Storing colostrum: If you know you are going to have your baby in the next day or two (perhaps a planned induction or caesarean section), you can keep the colostrum in the fridge. Fresh colostrum inhibits the growth of bacteria and can be refrigerated safely for up to 5 days.

If you are expressing colostrum from 37 weeks of pregnancy and you do not know when you will deliver your baby, once you have finished expressing for that day, **label and date the container and place it in the freezer.**

Transporting colostrum to the hospital:

- When you go into labour, take your milk from the freezer and pack it in a cool bag with ice to take to the hospital
- Give the milk to your midwife on arrival at the hospital for storage in the hospital fridge

The Infant Feeding Team

If you have any queries or concerns regarding feeding your baby or hand expressing colostrum, please contact the **Infant Feeding Team on 0151 290 4166 or email us InfantFeedingTeam@sthk.nhs.uk**

Please be aware that our phone line and email address are not accessible to us outside of normal working hours so if your query is urgent please contact Ward 2E or the maternity bleep-holder via switchboard (24 Hours).

Alternatively, you can attend our **Infant Feeding Drop In Clinic**, where we will be happy to help you.

The clinic is available:

**Every Friday
between 10.00 am - 12.00 midday
(except bank holidays)**

The clinic is held at:

**Whiston Hospital
Parent Education Room
Level 2
(just past maternity scan department)**

Light refreshments will be available

*****If our Infant Feeding Drop In Clinic is not operational for whatever reason the Infant Feeding Team will arrange an appointment for you to come and see us at your convenience*****

Whiston Hospital
Warrington Road,
Prescot, Merseyside, L35 5DR
Telephone: 0151 426 1600

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