

Antenatal Milk Expression

(Expressing Colostrum Before Birth)

Antenatal milk expression is the expression of small amounts of colostrum in the last 3-4 weeks of pregnancy. Colostrum is the name of the first milk your body makes and is rich in immunities and nutrition. Having some of your own colostrum to bring with you to the hospital can be helpful as your baby is learning to feed. Learning how to hand express has also been shown to increase a mother's confidence in the early days of breastfeeding. Below are a few tips to guide you in expressing your colostrum prior to birth:

- In most situations, it is safe to begin hand expression at 36 weeks of pregnancy. You should discuss your plan to express colostrum with your provider before you begin.
- Colostrum is typically expressed into a small cup (a medicine cup for example) and then pulled up into an oral syringe with a cap.
- Expressed colostrum in a capped syringe should then be labeled with your name, date and time of expression, and placed into your freezer.
- Colostrum should remain in your freezer until you are ready to come to the hospital.
- When you come to the hospital, bring your syringes of colostrum in a cooler on ice.
- **IMPORTANT: As soon as you are admitted to the hospital, let your nurse know that you have frozen colostrum that needs to be stored into the hospital's breast milk freezer. Milk that is thawed at room temperature for more than 4 hours cannot be used. This is why it is important to get your milk into the freezer as soon as possible!**
- Once your baby is born you will be assisted with breastfeeding. If your baby needs additional nutritional support – your colostrum can be thawed and used.

If you are unable to express milk prenatally – don't worry! This does not reflect your ability to produce milk after birth. If you are planning to exclusively breastfeed and have been unable to express colostrum – you may want to consider purchasing pasteurized donor human milk (PDHM) from a local milk bank. You can bring this frozen milk to the hospital and it can be used for nutritional support if needed. **Again, be sure to let your nurse know immediately if you have brought frozen PDHM to the hospital.** Please note – we are unable to use informally donated human milk in the hospital. Donor milk for use in the hospital must be from a certified human milk bank. For more information on obtaining PDHM, please contact Mother's Milk Bank Northeast <https://milkbankne.org>



Breast Massage



Hand Expression



Hands On Pumping

Breast massage and hand expression of breast milk in the early days following birth can help to build your milk supply. Simply use your phone camera to scan the QR Codes above to link you with some amazing videos to help you with these skills!