

Maternity

Hand expression, skin to skin, and kangaroo care

What does 'expressing milk' mean?

- Expressing milk means getting milk out of your breast so your baby can drink it later.
- You can do this with your hand, a hand pump, or an electric pump.
- Different pumps work better for different people, so it is good to ask which one might be best for you.
- Feeding equipment should be clean and sterilised before each use.

Why express milk?

It can be helpful to gently massage your breasts and express a few drops of your first milk (colostrum) right after your baby is born, especially if they miss a feed. How it helps:

- It finds your milk ducts, so you can get better at expressing milk.
- It tells your body to produce hormones (Prolactin and Oxytocin) that make more milk.
- It helps start your milk supply, so you have plenty later.
- It gets the milk flowing, which makes your baby want to start drinking.

Regular expression may be needed if:

- Your baby is born early (premature), ill, not feeding well or your breasts feel too full.
- You want to keep breastfeeding even you are away from your baby for a short time, like going back to work.
- Usually, it is best to wait until your breastfeeding is going well before letting someone else feed your baby your expressed milk - unless your baby is in the Special Care Baby Unit (SCBU) or cannot drink straight from the breast.



Why massage and express by hand?

- If your breasts feel uncomfortably full .
- If your baby isn't sucking well but you still want to give them your milk, or your baby is in the Special Care or Neonatal Unit.
- If you don't want to buy or use a pump to express milk.
- In the first few days, it is often easier and better to use your hands to get the milk, and later you can use a pump along with hand expressing.

How to hand express

- Before you start, wash your hands well.
- Use a clean container to collect milk, like a small syringe (1ml) or cup.
- If using a syringe, take the lid off and throw it away before giving the milk to your baby. Do this as soon as you take syringe out of the fridge.
- Always keep syringes and lids away from babies and children.

Steps:

1. It helps to be somewhere warm, private, and calm. Gently massage your breasts for a few minutes before you start. Warm towels or warm water from a shower or bath can also help.
2. Put your thumb and fingers in a 'C' shape about 2 to 3cm from the base of your nipple where the breast feels different. This should be the milk ducts. To find them, start near the nipple and moving your fingers back until you feel a difference in texture.
3. Gently squeeze and release in the same place and repeat until milk starts to come out.
4. Do not slide your fingers over the skin.
5. Collect the drops of milk in your clean syringe. It might be easier if someone helps you.
6. When the milk flow slows down or stops, move your fingers to a different part of your breast and repeat. Then do the same with the other breast.
7. You will only get 1 or 2 drops at a time. This is great, each drop of colostrum has around 3 million antibodies that protect your baby.
8. Label your milk container with your name, your date of birth, the date, and the time you expressed.

Patient Information

Don't worry, colostrum does not 'run out.' Your body will keep making colostrum until your milk 'comes in,' usually around day 3 after birth, but it can be different for each person.

All expressed milk		
Place	Maximum time	In hospital
Normal room temperature	4-6 hours	Up to 4 hours
Fridge: 5 - 10 degrees	3 days	48 hours
Fridge: 4 degrees or lowers	5 days*	48 hours

* If temperature rises above 4 degrees after 3 days, use within 6 hours or throw away.

All frozen expressed milk		
Place	Maximum time	In hospital
Freezer: 18 degrees or lower	6 months	3 months

Defrosting expressed milk		
Place	Maximum time	In hospital
When defrosting in the fridge	Usually takes 12 hours to defrost. Use as soon as fully defrosted and within 24 hours of removal from freezer	Usually takes 12 hours to defrost. Use as soon as fully defrosted and within 24 hours of removal from freezer

Important information

- Never put breastmilk back in freezer after it's been defrosted.
- You can use breastmilk from the fridge, warm in between your hands or warm it by putting the container in warm water for a little bit.
- Do not use a microwave to warm breastmilk because it can make some parts too hot (hot spots) and can ruin the milk.

Skin to skin contact and Kangaroo care (Special care babies)

This means direct skin on skin contact with your baby. Both mums and dads can do it.

Why is skin-to-skin good for babies

- Helps keep their body temperature just right.
- Helps their heartbeat and breathing stay steady.
- Helps them gain weight.
- Keep them stay calm and happy.
- Helps their brain grow
- Helps fight infections and makes them feel less pain.
- Skin to skin contact also helps mums and dads feel less stressed.

How to do skin to skin

- Sit down somewhere comfortably.
- Wear loose clothing that opens in the front.
- The baby should only wear a nappy and hat.
- Nurses or Midwives will show you how to hold the baby.
- Hold the baby upright, in between your breasts with their shoulders and hips touching your skin.
- Staff will help you find the best position that feels good for both of you.
- Use your clothes or a blanket to keep the baby safe and close.
- Lean back and enjoy the cuddle time
- Talk to your baby, stroke them, look into their eyes, and stay calm so the baby will feel calm too.

Where to get more support and information

- UHCW Infant feeding linktree for helpful videos and feeding support

You may find it useful to visit the [UHCW Infant Feeding Linktree](#) for more information about antenatal expression of colostrum, and for a video showing how to hand express.



Patient Information

- Coventry Infant Feeding Support Team: 0790 4984 620
Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm
<https://linktr.ee/coventryift>
- Warwickshire SWFT Infant Feeding Support Team
swg-tr.breastfeedingnorth@nhs.net
<https://linktr.ee/nhswarwickshirebreastfeeding>
- National Breastfeeding Helpline: 0300 100 0212
(09:00am to 09:00pm)
- NCT Breastfeeding Helpline: 0300 330 0700 (08:00am to 10:00pm)
- The Breastfeeding Network Support line: 0300 100 0210
- La Leche League Helpline: 0845 120 2918
- Association of Breastfeeding Mothers: 08444 122 949

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