

Expressing your breast milk

Introduction

Expressing your breast milk can be a helpful skill to learn in the early days of having a baby.

If you are separated from your baby or your baby is reluctant or unable to breastfeed it is important to ideally:

- start expressing within 6 hours of birth;
- express 8-10 times in 24 hours;
- express once at night.

This will help to stimulate and maintain your milk supply.

All breast milk collected is beneficial to your baby. Initially the volume of colostrum (the thick, rich early milk in the first few days) can be as little as 1ml but will increase as you continue to express regularly. The most appropriate method of giving your breast milk to your baby will be discussed with you at the time.

Hand Expressing

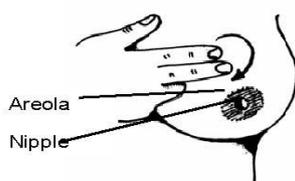
Preparation

Before you start

- Wash your hands thoroughly.
- Ensure any equipment for collecting and storing your breast milk has been washed in hot soapy water and sterilised immediately before use.
- It is helpful to have a clean, damp cloth and dry tissues close by in case there are accidental splashes or spillages of milk which can occur particularly with hand expressing.

To encourage your milk to flow:

- Find a warm, comfortable and relaxing place to sit.
- Hold your baby ideally with skin to skin contact, have baby nearby or have a photo of baby which you can see.
- Apply warm flannels to your breasts or have a warm bath.
- Gently massage all areas of your breasts being careful not to slide your fingers along the breast as this can cause skin damage - see below. Spend a few minutes massaging the breast/s before moving on.



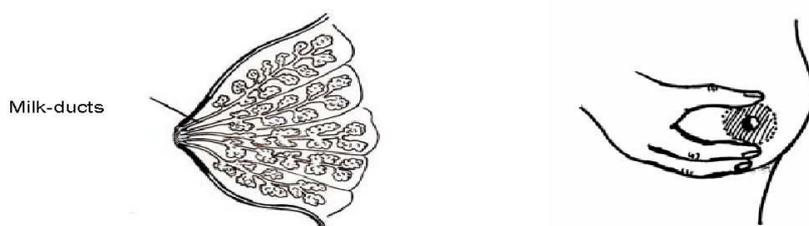
Use your fingertips in gentle circular movements



And/or gently roll your closed fist over your breast towards the nipple

Technique

- Cup your breast and make a 'C' shape with your thumb and forefinger.
- Place your thumb and finger on opposite sides of the nipple, 3-4cm apart, or where the texture of the breast tissue feels different.
- Without sliding your fingers over the skin, gently squeeze your thumb and finger together. This shouldn't hurt. Release the pressure and squeeze again and again, building up a rhythm.
- You may only see a few drops at first. The more you practice, the more colostrum will start to appear.
- Once the flow of colostrum has slowed down, rotate your fingers round to try a different part of the breast. When you have tried all parts of one breast, repeat the process on the other breast.
- Expressing from both breasts at the same time, whether by hand or pump, is said to increase milk volume and reduce the time taken. Pause for 30-60 seconds when the milk flow slows down to allow the ducts to refill.



Expressing using a manual or electric pump

- It is useful to hand express prior to using an electric pump as it may reduce the time it takes for the milk to start flowing.
- Correctly assemble all sterilised equipment.
- Support your breast if necessary.
- Place funnel centrally onto nipple and areola.
- Ensure suction dial is turned to its lowest setting if relevant.
- Switch on and increase suction gradually to the maximum comfortable level. If it is uncomfortable then the suction is too high.
- Some pumps have ways of varying the speed, this tries to mimic the way a baby feeds—quick sucks at the start of a breastfeed followed by slower sucks as the milk flow increases and the baby settles into a breastfeed. Some dual phase pumps do this automatically.
- Swap breasts each time the milk slows down. This allows the milk ducts to refill with milk.
- *Always remember to switch the pump off before removing the funnel from your breast.*
- Stop after 20-40 minutes or when the milk stops flowing.

Storing your breast milk at home

The lower the temperature of your fridge, the longer you can safely store your expressed milk. Below is a table as a guide:

PLACE	MAXIMUM TIME
Fresh breastmilk	Always store in a sealed container
Room	Can be kept at room temperature for up to 6 hours
Fridge: 5-8°C	Can be kept at the back of a fridge for up to 3 days
Fridge: 0-4°C	Can be kept at the back of a fridge for up to 5 days
Ice compartment	Can be stored in an ice compartment of a fridge for 2 weeks
<i>(if temperature rises above 4°C</i>	<i>after 3 days, use within 6 hours or throw away)</i>
Freezer: -18°C or lower	Can be stored in a deep freezer for 6 months
Previously frozen breastmilk	
Defrosted in fridge	Defrost in the fridge for 12 hours. Use as soon as possible after thawing
Defrosted outside fridge	Use immediately

- **Always wash your hands before expressing and handling breast milk.**
- **Always** use a sterile plastic container with a sealed lid to store your breast milk. Specially designed pre-sterilised bags are also suitable.
- Try to use a fresh storage container each time you collect milk. If necessary, newly collected milk may be cooled and added to previously stored milk collected on the same day.
- Label your milk container as breast milk with date and time of expressing.
- Expressed milk should be kept in the back of the fridge (rather than in the door) above and away from meat products, eggs or uncooked foods.
- **Remember—the more often your fridge is opened the more likely the temperature will rise.**

Using stored breast milk

- Ideally defrost frozen breast milk in the fridge. If needed quickly try defrosting under cool, then warm, running water. Thawed milk warmed to room temperature must be used straight away or discarded.
- Milk may be warmed to body temperature by standing the container in warm water for a few minutes. Do NOT use a microwave to defrost or warm breast milk. It is heated unevenly and could burn your baby's mouth.
- Stored milk may separate out. Shake gently to mix before use.
- Thawed breast milk should never be refrozen, or reheated.

Useful Contact Numbers

If after reading this leaflet you have any further queries regarding the expression of breast milk, the following may be useful:

Rothschild Ward (SMH)	01296 316158
Community Midwives Office (SMH)	01296 316120
Community Midwives Office (WH)	01494 425172

Infant Feeding Team
Rothschild Ward,
Stoke Mandeville Hospital
Mobile: **07798 520830**

Other sources of help:

National Breastfeeding Helpline:	0300 100 0212 (9.30am-9.30pm)
NCT Breastfeeding Helpline:	0300 330 0771 (8am-10pm)
Breastfeeding Network Supporter line: www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk	0300 100 0210 (9.30am-9.30pm)
Association of Breastfeeding Mothers Helpline: www.abm.me.uk	0300 330 5453 (9.30am-9.30pm)
La Leche League Helpline:	0845 120 2918 www.laleche.org.uk
Lactation consultants of Gt. Britain:	www.lcgb.org
Ardo Breastpump Hire:	01823 336362 www.ardobreastpumps.co.uk/hire
Medela UK Ltd Breastpump Hire:	0161 766 0400 www.medelarental.co.uk

Local breastfeeding support: Details from your health visitor, midwife or “Breastfeeding support for you” leaflet available from the Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust website:
www.buckshealthcare.nhs.uk

Approvals:

Maternity Guidelines Group: Jul 2010, V4 Oct 2014, V5 Nov 2019
O&G SDU: May 07, Oct 2010. O&G SDU V4 Nov 2014, V5 Apr 2020
Clinical Guidelines Subgroup: not required
MSLC: Jan 07, Sep 2010, Jul 2019
Equality Impact Assessment: Jan 08, Feb 2019
Patient Experience Group: Feb 08, Oct 2019

Division of Women, Children & Sexual Health Services