

Expressing milk for your baby – expressing log

Information for women, birthing parents and carers



If you were pregnant your body has made milk since you were 16-22 weeks, and now we encourage you to start expressing your milk. Ideally this should start within two hours of your baby/babies being born, or as soon as possible after birth. Massage and breast/chest compressions will help stimulate your milk ejection.

The value of colostrum

Colostrum is the early human milk that you make in pregnancy and in the first few days after giving birth. Every drop of human milk your baby receives has benefits for their health, and your health too. It protects baby from infection (especially of their gut), it contains components which help your baby grow and develop and it is easier to digest compared to artificial formula milk. Artificial formula does not have the same health benefits as breastmilk.

Expressing assessments

Neonatal or maternity staff will offer you an expressing assessment within 12 hours of your baby's birth and then a minimum of twice a week for the first two weeks, or more frequently if you require. They will check you know how to express by hand or use a pump, check the funnel size is correct, check how often you pump and if you need support.

Expressing – hand or pump

You can express by the side of your baby's cot or in our expressing room. If this is not possible, look at a video/photograph of your baby and use the fabric bonding shapes to smell your baby as this will help release your milk (the 'let down') and increase your oxytocin levels (oxytocin is the hormone which helps milk delivery).

It is recommended to express 8-10 times in 24 hours including once at night. This increases milk production due to higher levels of prolactin at night (prolactin is the milk-making hormone).

During the first few days you may only get small amounts of expressed milk (which is normal – every drop is valuable for your baby) but your milk should increase in volume each day. We recommend using both methods of expressing – hand and pump – as research shows this increases milk production amounts. Double pumping (using two pump kits) can also increase milk production and save time. Express each side of your breasts/chest until the milk slows down then either repeat another cycle or stop expressing. There are also options to build milk production such as switch pumping and power pumping. Staff can support you to make a plan to do this if needed.

Storage of human milk

You can store freshly expressed breast milk for 48 hours in the fridge and three months in the freezer while you are in hospital. Once taken out of the freezer, it must be used within 24 hours. Milk can be defrosted in the fridge.

At home, expressed milk can be stored for five days in the back of the fridge. If it is not likely to be used within five days, it can be placed in your freezer for up to six months.

Please refer to the NHS website for further information:

www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk/wp-content/pdfs/BFN%20Expressing%20Leaflet%202019.pdf

Please ask a member of staff if you need any support.

Skin to skin

Skin to skin has many benefits for you and your baby/babies. It can help your oxytocin levels, stimulate your milk production and is beneficial for your baby's immune system. You can have skin to skin for as long as you and your baby wish to continue.

Expressing log

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**Please use this space to record any comments
or questions you need to ask**

Further sources of information

NHS Choices: www.nhs.uk/conditions

Our website: www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk

Patient Experience Team (PET)

PET is available to help with any of your compliments, concerns or complaints, and will ensure a prompt and efficient service.

King's Mill Hospital: 01623 672222

Newark Hospital: 01636 685692

Email: sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net

If you would like this information in an alternative format, for example large print or easy read, or if you need help with communicating with us, for example because you use British Sign Language, please let us know. You can call the Patient Experience Team on 01623 672222 or email sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net.

This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant health professional would give you. External websites may be referred to in specific cases. Any external websites are provided for your information and convenience. We cannot accept responsibility for the information found on them. If you require a full list of references (if relevant) for this leaflet, please email sfh-tr.patientinformation@nhs.net or telephone 01623 622515, extension 6927.

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