

Outstanding Care,
Compassionate People,
Healthier Communities



Sherwood Forest Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Antenatal hand expressing and colostrum collection

Information for women and birthing people



SCAN ME

Why collect colostrum during pregnancy?

You can collect colostrum however you intend to feed your baby.

Collecting your milk before the birth of your baby (from 36 weeks of pregnancy, unless you have risk factors for premature labour – if you have such risk factors we would recommend waiting to start at 37 weeks of pregnancy), can be useful if your baby needs extra help with feeding after birth, especially if:

- You have diabetes or have taken labetalol (a blood pressure medicine) in pregnancy.
- Your baby is premature, small birth weight, ill, twins/triplets or has a condition such as a heart condition or cleft palate.

Colostrum (the first milk produced from 16 weeks of pregnancy, and after birth) helps to stabilise baby's blood glucose levels, and also fights infection.

Pick up a free colostrum collection kit from King's Mill Hospital's maternity ward reception (1st floor).

How to hand express:

1. Wash your hands. Have a sterile pot with a blue lid ready to express directly into. If you have bought your own syringes they need a bung/cap to ensure safe storage in our hospital freezer. **Important;** bungs/caps /transparent plastic tips must **always** be removed before giving milk to baby as they are a choking hazard.
2. To stimulate hormone release to increase the milk flow gently massage your breasts/chest prior to expressing.
3. Place your thumb and finger about 2-3cm from the base of the nipple.
4. Hold your first finger and thumb in a c-shape, using the soft pads of your fingers. Compress them together, gently squeezing and releasing in a steady rhythm – this should not hurt.
5. Drops of colostrum will appear gradually.
If colostrum does not drip after a few minutes, try changing the position of your fingers and thumb so the c shape is slightly further away from the base of the nipple and try again.



6. Avoid sliding your fingers forward towards the nipple as this can damage your skin and can be uncomfortable. Collect milk drops in a sterile storage pot.
7. When milk flow slows down, move into a 'u' shape to express a different section of your breast/ chest, and repeat the previous steps.
8. When drops of colostrum begin to slow or stop, move to your other breast/side of chest and repeat the process. Continue to collect in the same pot.
9. Please label every pot/syringe individually with a separate handwritten sticker – we cannot store milk which is incorrectly labelled.
10. To feed baby your milk we recommend using a syringe or cup, and do not recommend using a bottle or teat if you plan to breast/chest feed, as baby may adopt a flow preference which can affect how they breast/ chestfeed. Instead, staff can show you how to safely offer milk via syringe or feeding cup – up to 5mls of milk via syringe (with the bung/cap /plastic tip removed before feeding baby), or you can use a sterile feeding cup for amounts over 5mls.



How to store colostrum:

- Colostrum can be stored in the same sterile syringe/pot when expressed in a 24-hour period.
- Label each individual pot/ syringe with your name and the date and time of the expressing session.
- Once filled, store the pot/ syringes in a zip-lock bag in your freezer. Colostrum can be stored in your home fridge (4 degrees or lower) for 48 hours, or for up to 6 months in a large freezer (-18 degrees or lower).

What if I get some tightening?

Towards the end of your pregnancy you may start to feel your bump going hard and then softening; this is your womb tightening and relaxing. These are called Braxton Hicks contractions and are normal.

These tightenings may also occur when you express but are likely to settle once you stop expressing. It is unlikely that expressing will trigger labour, however, if this pain continues, you experience vaginal bleeding, your waters break, your baby is moving less than normal, baby's movements feel weaker than normal, baby has stopped moving or you just think something is wrong, please contact Maternity Triage immediately for advice (the contact number is in the 'Further information' section).

When and how often could I express?

Start expressing from 36 weeks unless you have risk factors for premature birth (then wait until 37 weeks). While you are pregnant, you can express for a few minutes, two or three times a day. Please do not worry if you are unable to produce milk during pregnancy – it is an option and not a requirement, and hand expressing in the antenatal period has no effect on successful milk production when baby is born.

When and how do I bring my milk into hospital?

Remember to bring your milk in a cool bag with an ice pack. Please label every pot individually. Let your midwife know you have milk which needs to be frozen immediately so that it can then be transferred to a lock box in our freezer to prevent it from defrosting too soon.

In hospital, if you have not used your milk in our freezer please take this home with you. We dispose of milk left in the freezer after you leave hospital.

Further information

If you have any questions please speak to your midwife or ring the hospital and ask to speak to the:

- Specialist midwife for infant feeding – 01623 622515, extension 2773.
- Specialist midwife for diabetes – 01623 622515, extension 2773.
- Maternity Triage – 01623 676170.

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.

To be completed by the Communications office
Leaflet code: PIL202609-05-AHE
Created: May 2019 / Revised: September 2026
/ Review date: September 2028