



Parents' guide to expressing milk

This leaflet is for the parents and carers of babies on Buscot Ward and explains how new mothers can express colostrum and milk for their babies.

The benefits of colostrum

Your first milk is called colostrum. It is like medicine for your baby, especially if they have been born prematurely or unwell.

It comes in small quantities and is packed full of antibodies, providing all the goodness your baby needs in its first few days of life.



This milk needs to be expressed by hand for the first couple of days after your baby is born.

Beginning to hand express within the first hour or two after birth will give you the best chance of achieving a full milk supply. Your baby's nurse or one of the Breastfeeding Team will support you with this simple technique. Alternatively, you can seek support from your midwife or nursery nurse on the postnatal ward.

Colostrum is high in anti-infective and anti-viral properties and is important for priming and protecting a baby's delicate gut.

The first time that you hand express, you will likely only produce a very small amount of colostrum, possibly even just a few drops. This is very normal and no amount is too small so please bring it to us to use for your baby.

Early and frequent stimulation of your breasts will 'switch on' milk producing hormones.

Expressing 8-10 times in each 24 hour period including in the night will ensure that you reach your maximum milk making potential and have enough milk to feed your baby.

Hand expressing technique

- **Stimulate your breast with massage and nipple rolling.**
- **Place your finger and thumb in a C shape about 2.5cm from the nipple.**
- **Using forefinger and thumb, compress and release in a steady rhythm, without sliding fingers along the skin.**
- **Milk may take a few minutes to flow. If milk doesn't flow, move fingers slightly up or down the breast and try again.**
- **Rotate fingers around the breast to ensure all milk ducts are stimulated.**
- **When milk flow slows or stops, express the other breast.**



Breast massage technique

- Gentle breast massage can help your milk to flow and make it easier to express milk.
- Begin by applying a warm compress, such as a flannel or towel to your breasts.
- You can stroke the area with gentle feather-like movements. You can also massage your breast with a hand action that rolls the knuckles downwards over the breast, beginning at the top of the breast and working towards the areola, gradually going over the whole breast.
- You should work your way around, ensuring that you are massaging the whole breast.
- To do this, stroke the area under the nipple and areola with flat hands in an upward movement.
- Massage should feel comfortable so remember to be gentle. If it is painful, stop and ask your nurse or midwife for advice.
- It can also be helpful to ask your partner or a friend to massage your back before you express, as this can also stimulate your milk flow.

Moving on to using an electric pump

After the first 24/48 hours you can start to express using an electric pump. There are many of these on the Newborn Care Unit as well as on the postnatal levels.

You will be provided with an expressing kit and shown how to use the 'Initiate/Maintain' programmes. There are also instructions attached to the pumps.



Expressing your milk with a pump

Breast pumps do not pump, suck or pull milk out of the breast. The breast pump removes milk as it flows into the nipple. Therefore, you should make sure you understand fully the following guidelines about milk expression before you begin.

Getting ready

- Give yourself plenty of time to prepare the equipment and express your milk.
- Make sure you have all the bits and pieces you will need close at hand.
- Make sure you wash your hands before you start.

Getting comfortable

- Try to sit comfortably, with your back straight. A sturdy chair with arms can make expressing much more comfortable.
- Support your breast from underneath, with fingers flat on your ribs and the index finger where the breast meets the ribs. This supports the breast tissue forward into the funnel.
- Make sure that the nipple is central to the funnel.
- Keep the funnel close enough to the breast to maintain a vacuum, but do not press it too firmly or the breast tissue will be squashed and the milk will not flow freely.
- Be careful not to set the suction level on the electric pump too high as this may make your nipples sore. Try increasing the vacuum on the pump slowly until it starts to feel a bit uncomfortable and then reduce it slightly.

- Do not try to remove the collection funnel whilst pumping as the vacuum can be strong. It can hurt if you pull away while the pump is running.
- Try gently massaging your breasts when expressing as this can encourage milk flow.
- Use breast compression to help stimulate the milk ejection reflex, helping your milk to flow more quickly.
- It may help to buy a comfortable bra as your breasts will need extra support during this time. Many nursing bras, with openings in the cup to help you access your breasts more easily, are available on the high street from specialist baby stores.

Tips for helping with expressing

- Expressing by the cot-side will help to stimulate lactation.
- If this isn't always possible then having a photograph and something with your baby's scent on such as an item of clothing or a blanket will help.
- Regular skin to skin contact with your baby, often called kangaroo care will stimulate your hormones and increase your milk supply.
- Expressing immediately after close contact with your baby will also help.

It may help to buy a comfortable bra as your breasts will need extra support during this time. Many nursing bras, with opening in the cup to help you access your breasts more easily, are available on the high street from specialist baby stores. Underwired bras should not be worn, as they can damage the tender breast tissue and may cause blocked milk ducts, which can result in mastitis.

How often should you be expressing?

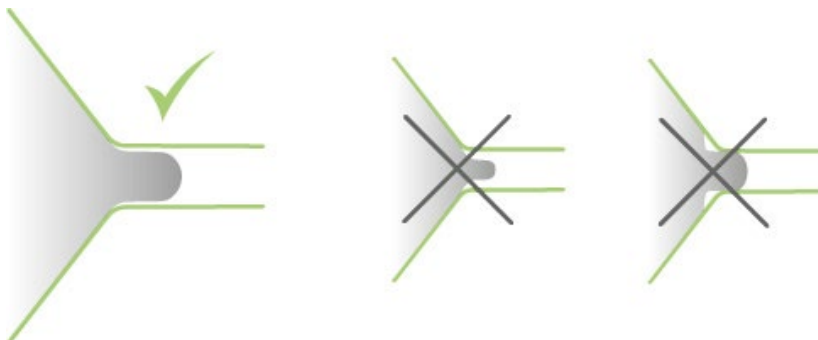
8-10 times in 24 hours, including in the night.



Increasing milk supply

Research has shown that double pumping may increase your milk supply, especially if your baby is born very early. It will also save a lot of time. It can be very beneficial to express beside your baby's cot or incubator. Expressing close to your baby will help the milk to flow more quickly. There are screens available around the unit for you to use whilst expressing, if you would like more privacy. Breast massage can also help to increase supply.

Do you have the correct funnel size?



Quick guide to expressing

- Wash hands thoroughly before expressing.
- Double pumping can increase milk supply and save time.
- Express 8-10 x per day, including overnight.
- Hand express until 24/48hrs post-delivery then move on to electric pump.
- INITIATE – press power button then droplet button within 10 seconds. Adjust suction. 15 minute programme, stay on INITIATE until 3 x consecutive expressions of 20mil or more.
- MAINTAIN – press power button. Adjust suction. Express for maximum of 30 minutes or for a few minutes after milk stops.
- Label milk with name, date and time of expression and store in fridge.
- Clean kit after every use using our 3 step guide.

How to keep your kit clean

Step One: Sterilise

Place items in microwave bag and add 60mls of water. Seal bag and place in microwave. Close door and set timer for 3 minutes. When ready remove holding bag at top. The bag will be hot – wait a few second then drain off excess water into sink through 'pour spout'. Products are now sterile and ready for use.

Step Two: Wash

After use, wash your kit in hot soapy water using your bottle brush to ensure there is no remaining milk residue. Rinse your kit under a running tap.

Step Three: Store

Store equipment in microwave bag ready for use.

Contact us

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact one of the nurses or midwives who will be happy to offer you advice and support throughout your journey.

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

RBFT Paediatric Unit, February 2025.

Next review due: February 2027.

Pumping log

Date: _____ Days in hospital: _____

	Start Time	End Time	Expressed Amount		Total Pumping Time	Pumping Notes
			Left Breast	Right Breast		
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						
9						
10						
Total						

Breastshield Size: 21 24 27 30 36 Kangaroo Care: Yes No

Journal:

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