

## Purpose

- To prepare for your baby's arrival. For situations such as an expected early birth, medical condition or previous breastfeeding difficulties.
- If you have diabetes during pregnancy your baby may be at risk of low blood sugars immediately after birth. Your expressed colostrum along with breastfeeding will help baby maintain blood sugar levels.
- Colostrum provides human antibodies. This protects baby's digestive system and is the most important first food for all babies. Although it is available in small amounts, it is a powerful food!

## Transport of Expressed colostrum

Use an insulated cooler bag with ice packs to transport the colostrum and place it in the freezer on either the labour and birthing suite or ward 96 (staff will assist you with this).

You can access the freezer at any time, even if you are on Tamaki Ward for your postnatal stay.

## References

### Sue Cox

Expressing and Storing Colostrum Antenatally for Use in the Newborn Period. Issues 17 (1)  
Apr/May2007

### Dr Jane Morton

<http://newborns.stanford.edu/Breastfeeding/HandExpression.html>

### NZ Ministry of Health

Guidelines for Storage of Breastmilk.  
Reviewed January 2020

Thank you to Otago Maternity for the use of this document.

**Te Whatu Ora**  
Health New Zealand  
Te Toka Tumai Auckland

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**Te Whatu Ora**  
Health New Zealand

**Expressing  
Colostrum  
Antenatally**

## How to hand express

Ask your midwife to show you how to hand express to collect your colostrum.

To view a how-to video, visit [www.stanford.edu](http://www.stanford.edu)

Keywords: *Hand Expressing Milk*.

1. With clean hands gently massage your breast(s) first.
2. Make a C shape with you thumb and fingers, place your thumb on top of your breast and fingers underneath your breast, position is near the top of the areola.
3. Push straight in to chest wall (avoid spreading fingers apart)
4. Press thumb and fingers gently together – hold - release, and repeat creating a rhythm.
5. When flow slows, slightly move your hand position clockwise and start again.

You can start hand expressing from 36 weeks.

Aim to express by hand for 3-5 minutes each side, up to 3-4 times per day .



Some women have little colostrum, some have lots. Don't be discouraged – it often gets easier closer to term.

1. Draw colostrum up in the provided syringe
2. You can add to the syringe over the next 2 days as long as they are at the same temperature (refrigerate fresh colostrum first to bring it to the same temperature)
3. Label each syringe with the date (Always the date of the oldest expressed colostrum if combined) and freeze in a named zip lock bag **within 48 hours of expressing**
4. Bring frozen syringes to hospital in a cool pack to keep frozen
5. Store on **Ward 96 or Labour and birthing suite** in the appropriate freezer.
6. If baby is unable to breastfeed at birth, give 2-10mls of colostrum every 3-4hrs over the next 24hrs.

**Hand expressing should not hurt.** If it hurts, perhaps your fingers are too close to the nipple. Avoid squeezing, pulling or sliding.

**If you develop any abdominal pains while expressing, you should stop.** Labour is not usually triggered by hand expressing unless your uterus is very sensitive and ready for birthing.

## Storage of Expressed colostrum

Make sure the colostrum is clearly dated and timed so the oldest is used first.

### Room temperature

Freshly expressed colostrum can be stored at room temperature for up to 4 hours.

### Refrigerator

Colostrum can be stored in the refrigerator for up to 48 hours.

### Freezing

You can combine your colostrum in the syringes as long as they are at the same temperature. However, you must label it with the oldest collections date and time. Colostrum must be placed in the freezer after 48 hours in the refrigerator.

Note: Adding freshly expressed colostrum to frozen colostrum can cause the frozen colostrum to thaw and then refreeze, which increases the risk of bacterial growth.

## Which milk to use first?

Straight from mother is always best, followed by fresh and lastly previously frozen colostrum..