



## Infant Feeding: Antenatal Colostrum Harvesting

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### Maternity



We hope that this leaflet will be a useful introduction to colostrum harvesting.

Colostrum is the first milk your body produces. It is the perfect source of nutrition, and:

- Triggers your baby's own immune system and helps your baby to fight off infections and viruses.
- Aids digestive development & protects your baby from allergies.
- Encourages your baby to open their bowels and pass meconium, reducing the risk of jaundice.

Colostrum is very concentrated so your baby will only need a small amount in order to receive all the nutrients they need.

**Interesting fact: your baby's stomach is approximately the size of a small marble at birth, a large marble at three days old, and a ping pong ball at seven days.**



### **Who may be advised to colostrum harvest?**

During pregnancy your breasts will start to produce colostrum. The exact timing of this will vary from person to person.

Colostrum harvesting can be especially beneficial for your baby if they are likely to have difficulties with feeding or maintaining their blood glucose levels in the first few days following birth.

This may be because your baby:

- is large or small for their gestational age.
- is a twin or triplet.
- has a cleft lip or palate.
- has Down's syndrome or a heart complication.

It may also be beneficial if you:

- are diabetic or have gestational diabetes.
- are taking beta blockers to control high blood pressure.
- have pre-eclampsia.
- have polycystic ovary syndrome.
- have breast hypoplasia or have had breast surgery.
- have a raised body mass index (BMI).
- are having an elective caesarean section.

Colostrum harvesting should not be started until you are between 36 & 37 weeks pregnant.

## **Hand Expressing**

You can hand express 1-2 times each day for a few minutes at a time. This can gradually be increased over a few days building up to gently expressing for five to ten minutes 2-5 times a day.

Colostrum can be collected and stored in the sterile syringes provided.

Remember to always wash your hands prior to hand expressing.

## **How to hand express:**

1. Use the sterile syringes provided.
2. Make yourself comfortable and relaxed.
3. Spend a few minutes massaging your breast towards the nipple.
4. Use your hand to cup your breast, holding your hand in a 'C' shape.

Your thumb and fingers should be approximately 2-3cm away from the base of the nipple.

5. Use your thumb and index finger to gently squeeze, release, and then repeat in a rhythm, being careful not to slide your fingers along the skin.
6. Drops may appear after a few minutes. If not, simply move the fingers forward or back to the correct position.
7. When the drop stop, move your fingers around the breast and repeat.



**Don't be disheartened if you don't see any colostrum on your first attempt. This is normal.**

## **Storing expressed breast milk**

You will need to place the bung provided on the end of the syringe when you have finished hand expressing.

Always label the syringe with your name, the date and time you expressed.

Put the labelled syringe in a clean re-sealable bag and place it in the freezer.

You can store breast milk at the back of the fridge at a temperature of 2- 4 degrees Celsius for up to 24 hours before you freeze it.

Once the colostrum has been warmed ready to use, it should be used immediately and discarded after one hour.

<b>Safe Storage of Breast Milk – Fresh Breast Milk</b>	
<b>Place</b>	<b>Maximum Time</b>
Room	6 hours
Fridge: 5-10 Degrees Celsius	3 Days
Fridge: 0-4 Degrees Celsius	8 days
Freezer: -18 Degrees Celsius	6 Months
<b>Previously Frozen Breast Milk</b>	
Defrosted in the fridge	12 hours
Defrosted outside fridge	Use Immediately

## Bringing your colostrum to the hospital

Once labour has started, you can bring stored colostrum to the hospital using a cool bag and freezer blocks to minimise thawing during transportation.

Only bring what you need to hospital on a daily basis.

Please tell your midwife when you arrive so that the colostrum can be stored in the hospital fridge. Once thawed the colostrum should be used within 12 hours.

Following birth, breastfeeding should be commenced and ideally breastfeeding will be established. Baby may not require the harvested colostrum top up if breastfeeding is going well.

The harvested colostrum may be used following a breastfeed to maintain blood glucose levels if required and reduce the need for formula feed top-ups.

Your midwife may ask you to express fresh colostrum prior to giving the harvested colostrum to stimulate your breast and support future milk supply.

Prior to giving your baby the harvested colostrum it will need to be brought to room temperature. This can be done by placing it next to your skin or putting the bag in a bowl of warm water.

## Feeding Support

Please contact your community midwife if you require any further information, or:

Michelle Littlejohn, Health and Wellbeing Midwife: 07973852157

Kathleen Mclatchie, Diabetes Specialist Midwife: 07773595454

## National Breastfeeding Support

National Breastfeeding Helpline: 0300 100 0212 Lines open daily 9.30am - 9.30pm.

NCT Helpline: 0300 330 0700 8am to midnight, 365 days a year.

La Leche League Helpline: 0845 120 2918 Lines open 24 hours a day.

Association of Breastfeeding Mothers: 0300 330 5453. Lines open daily 9.30 am – 10.30 pm.

BfN Facebook page - "Mum's milk on the go".

## Useful Websites

[www.gestationaldiabetes.co.uk/colostrum-harvesting](http://www.gestationaldiabetes.co.uk/colostrum-harvesting)

<https://www.uhmb.nhs.uk/maternity>

[www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly/baby-friendly-resources/video/hand-expression/](http://www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly/baby-friendly-resources/video/hand-expression/)

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## **Other formats**

If you would like to receive this information in an alternative format, then please contact : 01539 795497.

## **Travelling to our hospitals**

For the best way to plan your journey visit our website:  
<http://www.UHMB.nhs.uk/> or contact Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS): 01539 795497.

## **Useful Contact Details**

NHS 111 (for 24 hour urgent health advice): telephone 111

## **Your Information**

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## **Evidence**

Details of the evidence used in writing this leaflet are available on request from: Patient Information Officer at 01524 512476.

## **Feedback**

We appreciate and encourage feedback. If you need advice or are concerned about any aspect of care or treatment, please speak to a member of staff or contact PALS on 01539 795497.

UHMBT is a no smoking Trust. Smoking is not permitted on any of the hospital sites. You can contact the NHS North Lancashire Stop Smoking services on the number below:

**NHS Quit Squad - 0800 328 6297**

If you live in Cumbria, please call **0300 013 3000** to find a local pharmacy who are offers 1-2-1 support and nicotine replacement therapy.

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