

Neonatology

Breast milk

Supporting you and your baby



Introduction

As your baby is not able to go to the breast and start feeding by themselves yet, we need to support you to express your milk.

As you may know, breast milk is the best food that you can give to your baby in these early months. Every drop of breast milk you produce for your baby:

- is easy to digest
- reduces the risk of infection
- passes on your protective immunity
- develops and protects your baby's immature gut
- helps their brain to grow and encourages developmental progress

Hand expression: Removing colostrum (first breast milk)

It is important to start massage and hand expressing as soon as possible after your baby is born. Staff in the delivery suite will help you to start expressing breast milk and this support will continue on the postnatal ward and neonatal unit.

This booklet explains how to express and how we will help you to do this. A nurse or midwife will always be available to support you, show you what to do and answer any questions you have.

We will make sure you have a chair to sit on so you are near your baby, and give you the privacy you need so you can feel relaxed and comfortable. If you are unable to be with your baby on the neonatal unit, ask your midwife for support in hand expressing and using the breast pump.

How to start

- wash your hands
- make sure you are warm and comfortable
- try to massage each breast for two or three minutes before trying to express. Massaging will help to stimulate your hormones and the breast to produce milk

Breast massage – learn the moves



Place one hand on the top of the breast and the other hand on the underside. Gently push your breast downwards using flat palms and circular movements. Move your hands, ensuring you stimulate the sides of your breast too.



Next, use the flat of your fingers, and apply gentle pressure to your breast. Move in small circular motions downwards towards the nipple. Ensure you cover all areas of the breast, changing hands if required.



Lean forwards and press the flat part of your hand on your breast. Apply gentle pressure, while moving your hand towards the nipple as if you are gently pushing the milk in that direction.



Use your fingertips, and lightly flutter your fingers across the breast and onto the nipple to stimulate your nipple.

Using your hand to express milk

- Place your forefinger and thumb 2-3 centimetres from the base of the nipple
- Make a “c” shape with your forefinger and thumb
- Press and compress then release with a steady rhythm until the milk starts flowing. The first milk is called colostrum. It is thick and can take some time to get to the nipple



- If the milk does not flow you could try to compress or ‘push’ your fingers back toward the chest wall; try not to slide your fingers across the breast tissue. Then ‘press’ your fingers to meet and ‘roll’ them toward the nipple and release. Repeat this action all around the breast until it feels like all the colostrum has been removed, then move to the other breast, stopping to massage whenever the flow of milk slows down
- Collect the drops of expressed colostrum in a syringe. Label the syringe with the date and time you expressed it and bring it to the unit for your baby as soon as you can
- To support milk production you can try more massage, and apply a clean and warm flannel to each breast to encourage the milk to flow



Gentle massage



C shaped hand



Push back



Compress



Roll towards nipple



Help collect every drop in a syringe

Do be gentle with yourself as breast massage and hand expressing should not cause you pain or damage your breast.

The Miniboo[®] cuddle cloth



Thinking of your baby and having their lovely baby smell on the Miniboo cuddle cloth can encourage your milk to flow. So when you go to express milk take the Miniboo from the incubator or cot with you. When the cloth is used in this way it is a real comfort to your baby because when you come back and put it in their incubator or cot it now has your lovely smell on it too.

How to establish a regular, plentiful and steady breast milk supply for your baby

The more you express, the more milk you will make.

New-born babies usually feed eight to ten times in 24 hours, so that is the ideal number of times to express milk. You are removing milk just like your baby would if they could do so.

We really do understand that expressing milk can be tiring, especially when you are recovering from your delivery and you are worried about your baby.

Always massage your breasts before starting to express. Continue expressing and the milk will come.

Storing, handling and transporting breast milk

	Fresh breastmilk at room temp	In fridge 2-4°C	From fridge and brought to room temp	Frozen at -20°C	Thawed then stored In fridge 2-4°C	Thawed then kept at room temp
IN HOSPITAL	Up to 4hrs	Up to 48hrs	Up to 4hrs	Up to 3 months	12 hours	Up to 4hrs
AT HOME	Up to 6hrs	Up to 8 days	Up to 4hrs	Up to 6 months	12 hours	Up to 4hrs

Once these storage times are exceeded milk must be discarded
Label stored milk with baby's name, DOB and hospital number and date and time of expression

Store in small clean containers; use main part of fridge not the door.

Transport your milk to the neonatal unit in a cold bag with cool packs.

Freeze milk that is not needed soon so you can store it for longer

Breast pumps

We will show you how to use an electric pump as soon as you feel ready. Some Mum's like to use the pump straight away while others prefer to wait but, at some point, suction is necessary to support a good milk supply.

Electric breast pumps are available to use on the neonatal unit and postnatal ward. Breast pumps can be bought or hired. Please ask staff for more information. There are manual (not powered) pumps too and these can be bought online and in most supermarkets and pharmacies.

Breast sizes vary so we have a range of funnel sizes to ensure best fit and avoid damage to the breast tissue. Your breasts may change in size during your lactation so you may need different funnel sizes in the first few weeks of expressing.

How to get a breast pump routine going

You need to express your milk a minimum of eight times in 24 hours. You do not have to do this at fixed three-hourly intervals, but find a routine that works best for you. The important times to express are:

- before you go to bed
- as soon as you get up in the morning
- between 02.00 and 04.00 when your milk-making hormone levels are high. Expressing at this time will help make more milk for the next day

It is important not to delay expressing your milk just because your breasts do not feel full.

An empty breast produces milk more quickly than a full breast. If you leave your breasts until they feel full you will slow down your milk production.

Skin to skin

Once your baby is ready for skin to skin cuddles we will help you take your baby out of the incubator or cot. Having skin to skin cuddles with your baby encourages your body to make milk and can improve your milk supply. Ask your baby's nurse to help you get used to doing this as often as possible.

Ways you can make more milk

You can pump both breasts at the same time. This is called 'double pumping'. This can speed up milk production as the pumping is done on both breasts at the same time.

Try to be near your baby when you are expressing milk - being able to see your little one can help you to produce the hormone that releases your milk.

You can pump at your baby's cot side when you are with your baby.

When you are not with them you can look at a photo of them.

The sight or smell of something belonging to your baby such as an item of their clothing, or the Miniboo[®] cloth, that has been with them in their cot, may also encourage your milk flow when you express.

Your partner/family/friends can help

They can support you by:

- encouraging and helping you to express milk

-
- cooking and bringing in meals for you
 - ensuring you get enough rest
 - taking milk to the neonatal unit for you

Taking care of yourself

- Drink plenty of fluids as this will help you to produce milk and always having a drink with you - expressing milk is thirsty work!
- Eat regularly and try to have a healthy, balanced diet
- Sometimes lots of small healthy snacks are as good and easier than large, regular meals
- Take a vitamin D supplement (400IU / 10µg a day) to replenish your stores taken during your pregnancy. We all need vitamin D, especially nursing mothers
- Do not drink too much alcohol when looking after a baby - keep within two units a day. That means, a small glass of wine, or half a pint of lager or beer, or a single shot of gin with tonic water
- Make sure you get enough rest and sleep. It can be hard adjusting to shorter sleep times with a new baby
- Try to sleep for several hours before waking up to express and then sleep again. If you go to bed at 22.00, wake up at 02.00. If you go to bed at 12 midnight, wake up at 04.00
- Hand expressing during the night may interrupt your sleep less than using a breast pump, but you can try both ways to see what suits you

We are here to help you so please talk to our nursing staff about how you are getting on and ask us any questions you may have.

How do I make a comment about my visit?

We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer any of the questions you may have. If you have any **suggestions** or **comments** about your visit, please either speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (**PALS**) on **020 3313 0088** (Charing Cross, Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's & Chelsea hospitals), or **020 3312 7777** (St Mary's and Western Eye hospitals). You can also email PALS at imperial.pals@nhs.net The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

Alternatively, you may wish to complain by contacting our complaints department:

Complaints department, fourth floor, Salton House, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street, London W2 1NY

Email: ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net

Telephone: **020 3312 1337 / 1349**

Alternative formats

This leaflet can be provided on request in large print or easy read, as a sound recording, in Braille or in alternative languages.

Please email the communications team:

imperial.communications@nhs.net

Wi-fi

We have a free wi-fi service for basic filtered browsing and a premium wi-fi service (requiring payment) at each of our five hospitals. Look for WiFiSPARK_FREE or WiFiSPARK_PREMIUM

Neonatology
Published: March 2019
Review date: March 2022
Reference no:
© Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust