

Expressing breast milk for your baby on the Neonatal Unit

Neonatal Unit
Information for Patients

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Introduction

This leaflet gives you information about expressing breast milk for your baby. This leaflet is for those who plan to breastfeed and those who do not plan to breastfeed.

Your baby is currently being cared for on the Neonatal Unit. We understand that this may be an unexpected and emotional time for you and your family.

We encourage you and your chosen support person to spend as much time as possible with your baby. You are welcome on the unit at any time.

We will support you to have skin-to-skin contact with your baby as soon as it is safe to do so. Spending time skin-to-skin helps you and your baby get to know each other. It can also support feeding, bonding, growth, and your baby's wellbeing.

The value of colostrum

If your baby is born early or is unwell, your breast milk is very important. It is often described as being like medicine. This is because it contains nutrients, antibodies, and other protective factors that help your baby grow and stay healthy.

Colostrum is the first milk your body makes. It is often thick, white or yellow in colour, and you will make small amounts of it during the first few days. Even a few drops can make a big difference for your baby.

Colostrum helps protect your baby's developing brain, lungs, and immune system. It is also easy to digest and can help lower the risk of a serious bowel illness called necrotising enterocolitis (NEC). NEC is more common in babies born early.

We encourage you to start expressing colostrum within the first 2 hours after birth if possible. Starting early helps your body make more milk and supports your milk supply.

Every drop of breast milk helps give your baby the best start in life. You can decide later whether you would like to keep on breastfeeding or expressing milk.

Your midwife and neonatal team are here to support you every step of the way.

Hand expressing

If your baby is born early, your body may make colostrum for longer. This is helpful because colostrum gives your baby extra protection.

Your midwife or Neonatal nurse will help you start hand expressing within the first 2 hours after birth.

In the first few days, you will only make small amounts of colostrum. This is normal, and every drop is important for your baby. Over the next few days, the amount of milk you make should slowly increase.

Expressing your milk often (8 to 10 times a day) in the early days helps your body make more milk and expressing at least once at night will help your supply.

If you are worried about your milk supply please speak to your nurse, midwife, or neonatal team.

What can help you make milk?

- Spend time skin-to-skin with your baby.
- Express your milk beside your baby, where you can see and touch them.
- If you cannot be with your baby, look at photos of them, smell your bonding square, or think about your baby while expressing.
- Try not to worry about how much milk you are making. It is normal to make only small amounts at first. Every drop counts.
- Try not to leave long gaps between expressing, no more often than 4 hours in the day and 5 hours at night.

Watch the video

You may find it helpful to watch the video below to learn how to hand express your milk.

Visit <https://vimeo.com/993391423?fl=pl&fe=vl> or scan the QR code with your phone or tablet to watch a step-by-step demonstration.

The video shows:

- How to hand express your milk.
- The best hand position to use.
- How to collect colostrum safely.



How to hand express: visual guide

It is important to remember that Hand expression should be comfortable.

	Step 1 Start off by encouraging your milk flow. To express by hand, start by gently massaging your breast and nipple to stimulate the hormones needed to release milk. Massage for 2 minutes.
	Step 2 Position your thumb and fingers in a 'C' shape 2 to 3 cm back from the base of the nipple.
	Step 3 Gently press and release, press and release and keep repeating until your milk starts to flow. This may take a few minutes. If no milk comes try changing the position of your fingers a bit up or down your breast.
	Step 4 When the flow slows down, move your fingers round to a different part of your breast and start again. Change breasts and start again.

Breast pump

Start using the breast pump as soon as possible after birth. Do not wait. Starting early helps your body make milk and build a good milk supply.

Using the breast pump on both breasts at the same time (double pumping) can save time and may help you make more milk. You can use a pumping bra or a modified bra to help hold the funnels in place.

It is important that the breast funnels fit well. The funnel is the part of the pump that goes over your breast. A good fit helps make expressing comfortable and can help with your milk supply.

Staff will check in with you regularly during the first few weeks to see how you are getting on.

The pump should not hurt. It should not cause bruising or pull your nipple painfully into the funnel.

If expressing by hand or pump feels uncomfortable, please speak to your nurse or midwife.

How often should I use the breast pump?

- Try to express your milk 8 to 12 times every 24 hours, including during the night.
- Pump for about 20 minutes, or until the milk flow slows down or stops.
- The pump strength can be adjusted. Start on a low setting and increase it slowly until it feels comfortable. Using a setting that is too strong can cause pain or damage to your nipple.
- Different funnel sizes are available. Staff can help you find the right size.

How much milk will I express?

The amount of milk you express should slowly increase during the first week.

- During the first 24 hours, it is common to get only a few drops.
- You may not get any milk the first time you express. This is normal.
- By the next day, you may notice more milk.
- Over the next few weeks, the amount you express will begin to increase.

Many things can affect how much milk you express. The amount you collect does not always show how much milk your body is making. Every drop is valuable for your baby.

While you are in hospital, your midwife or Neonatal nurse will help you complete an expressing assessment. This helps make sure expressing is working well and gives you a chance to ask any questions.

Kangaroo care (skin-to-skin contact)

As soon as your baby is well enough, staff will help you have skin-to-skin contact with your baby.

Skin-to-skin contact can:

- Help keep your baby warm.
- Help your baby's breathing and heart rate stay steady.
- Help calm both you and your baby.
- Help your baby sleep and grow.
- Comfort your baby after tests or treatments.
- Help your body make the hormones needed for milk production.

As your baby grows, they may start showing signs that they are ready for feeding, such as:

- Bringing their hands to their mouth.
- Making sucking movements.
- Licking their lips.

This is a good time to start practising breastfeeding.

Please remember

- Some days will be harder than others. Be kind to yourself and take time to rest.
- Please remember to look after yourself.
- Remember to eat and drink.
- Skin-to-skin contact can help you and your baby feel calm and can help your milk supply.
- Expressing close to your baby can help increase the hormones that make and release milk.
- If you cannot be with your baby, looking at photos or smelling a bonding square can help.
- Expressing during the night is important for maintaining your milk supply.
- Cluster expressing (expressing 2 or 3 times over a few hours) can help increase your milk supply.
- Try not to leave long gaps between expressing sessions.
- If you are worried about your milk supply, speak to your nurse or midwife.
- Every drop of milk counts.

Expressing log

Use the expressing log to record how many times you express each day and how much milk you collect. This can help you keep track of your milk supply and allows your nurse or midwife to support you if needed.

Below is an expressing log for Week 1. Please share your completed log with your neonatal nurse. Once you have handed it in, you will be given the next week's log so that we can continue to support you throughout your baby's stay.

Expressing number	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:
1	mls	mls	mls	mls	mls	mls	mls
2	mls	mls	mls	mls	mls	mls	mls
3	mls	mls	mls	mls	mls	mls	mls
4	mls	mls	mls	mls	mls	mls	mls
5	mls	mls	mls	mls	mls	mls	mls
6	mls	mls	mls	mls	mls	mls	mls
7	mls	mls	mls	mls	mls	mls	mls
8	mls	mls	mls	mls	mls	mls	mls
Total Daily Amount	mls	mls	mls	mls	mls	mls	mls

Tips for successful expressing

Start early

- Start expressing within 2 hours of birth.
- Begin with hand expressing and start using the breast pump as soon as possible after birth.
- Your first milk is called colostrum. Colostrum is full of nutrients and helps protect your baby from infection.
- At first, you may only produce a few drops. This is normal. As you continue expressing, your milk supply should increase.

Express often

- Express at least 8 to 10 times every 24 hours.
- Express at least once during the night.
- The more often you express, the more milk your body is likely to make.
- You do not need to express at exactly the same time each day.
- Try not to go longer than 5 hours without expressing, especially during the first few weeks.

Make expressing effective

- Gently massage your breasts before and during expressing.
- Use a warm flannel on your breasts before expressing if they feel full or uncomfortable.
- If possible, double pump to save time and help increase milk production.
- Try to empty your breasts as fully as possible during each session.

Stay close to your baby

- Keep a bonding square or an item that smells of your baby nearby when expressing.
- Spend time skin-to-skin with your baby whenever possible.
- Looking at a photo of your baby can help your milk flow.
- Remember that you are doing a great job. Every drop of milk helps your baby.

More information

The UNICEF UK Baby Friendly Initiative: <https://www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly>

The UNICEF Baby Friendly Initiative helps families give their babies the best start. On the neonatal unit, staff support parents to express milk, build their milk supply, and provide breastmilk safely for their baby.

Bliss - Feeding: <https://www.bliss.org.uk/parents/about-your-baby/feeding>

Bliss is a charity that supports babies born sick or premature and their families. They provide information, emotional support, and practical help. Bliss works with neonatal staff to improve care and support parents with feeding and expressing milk for their baby.

Contact details

Leicester Royal Infirmary Hospital,

Infirmary square,

Kensington building,

Level 2 Neonatal Unit.

Le1 5WW

Phone number: **0116 258 6462**

Leicester General Hospitals,

Maternity Entrance,

Special Care baby Unit

Gwendolen Road

LE5 4PW

Phone number: **0116 258 4800**

Health information and support is available at www.nhs.uk or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice

Visit www.uhleicester.nhs.uk for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals.

To give feedback about this information sheet, contact uhl-tr.informationforpatientsmailbox@nhs.net

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔
ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸے دوسرے زبان ਵਿੱਚ چاہੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ، ਤਾਂ ਵਿਰਧਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਗਏ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।
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જો તમને અન્ય ભાષામાં આ માહિતી જોઈતી હોય, તો નીચે આપેલ નંબર પર કૃપા કરી ટેલિફોન કરો.

If you would like this information in another language or format such as EasyRead
or Braille, please telephone 0116 250 2959 or email uhl-tr.equalitymailbox@nhs.net

We are a research hospital and you may be asked to take part in research