

A stylized illustration of a pregnant woman with dark skin and curly hair, wearing a white sleeveless top and a purple skirt, standing on a green hill and holding her belly. The background features a light blue sky with white clouds and a green landscape with stylized trees.

# ANTENATAL COLOSTRUM HARVESTING

Learning to hand express your colostrum in pregnancy is a great way to prepare for your breastfeeding journey. By expressing your colostrum towards the end of pregnancy you will be better prepared to meet any feeding challenges should they arise.



building a caring future

You can begin expressing by hand a few times a day from **36 weeks of pregnancy**. However, you should avoid expressing if you are at risk of pre-term labour (unless advised by your clinician). Learning to hand express your colostrum in pregnancy is a great way to prepare for your breastfeeding journey. By expressing your colostrum towards the end of pregnancy you will be better prepared to meet any feeding challenges should they arise.



## Breast Massage



Breast massage promotes blood circulation in the breasts which transports hormones – and its hormones that affect milk production and milk flow. Brief massaging and gentle lifting and moving of your breasts, especially just before breastfeeding or an expressing session, will encourage flow and improve lymph drainage.



## Hand Expression

1. Have a clean sterilised container / syringe to hand before you start. Ensure you have clean, freshly washed hands.
2. Cup your breast and place your thumb and finger about 2-3 cm from the base of the nipple.
3. Using your thumb and the rest of your fingers in a C shape, gently squeeze this area - this shouldn't hurt.
4. Release the pressure and then repeat again and again, building up a rhythm. Avoid sliding your fingers over the skin. At first, only drops will appear, but just keep going as it will help build up your supply. With practise and a little more time, milk will flow freely.
5. When the flow slows down, move your fingers round to try a different section of your breast and repeat. When this happens again swap to the other breast. Keep changing breasts until the milk is dripping very slowly or stops altogether.
6. If the milk doesn't flow, try moving your fingers slightly towards the nipple or further away, and try a gentle breast massage.



# Storage and Transport

You can collect your colostrum 2-3 times on the same day and store in the same syringe. The end of the syringe should be capped off with the cap provided and stored at the back of the fridge between uses to a maximum of 4oC. At the end of the day your colostrum should be placed in the freezer in a zip lock freezer bag. Ensure that each syringe is labelled with your name, date and time expressed (small labels can be found in your hand-held notes).

When it is time to come into hospital to have your baby bring in the syringes of colostrum that you have. If you can, it's best to bring the colostrum in frozen so we recommend you transport them in a clean insulated cool bag using ice packs in the bag to maintain an appropriate temperature. Hand it to your midwife on your arrival and they will store in the freezer until it's needed.

If you need further information please ask your midwife who will be happy to support you.

**EXPRESSED  
BREASTMILK**  
CAN BE STORED IN  
YOUR FREEZER FOR:

**2 WEEKS**  
IN A FREEZER  
COMPARTMENT  
OF A FRIDGE

**6 MONTHS**  
IN A DEEP  
FREEZER  
(-18°C)