

# HOW TO EXPRESS COLOSTRUM PRENATALLY

One of the things that parents can do to prepare for breastfeeding is practice the technique of hand-expression and perhaps even save some small amounts of colostrum which can be given to your baby in the early days, if it is needed.

## What is colostrum?

Colostrum is the “early milk” that begins to be produced around the twentieth week of pregnancy and up until the first three or four days after a baby is born. It can be dark yellow or clear or any colour in between. It varies in consistency but is often quite thick and somewhat sticky.

**Most women with low-risk pregnancies can begin hand-expression at 37 weeks, unless advised not to by their doctors or midwives.**

Any colostrum you express can be saved and given to your baby if your baby needs to be supplemented for any reason in the early days after birth. For more information see *Prenatal Colostrum Expression*.

Hand-expression takes some practice so there is no need to be concerned if you don't get any drops at all. That's okay. Whether or not you are able to remove any colostrum in pregnancy does not reflect how much milk you will make once your baby arrives. It is still helpful to get to know your breasts and practice hand-expression.

## Supplies you will need

- A clean cup to express the colostrum into;
- Several small 3-5mL syringes (which you can buy at a pharmacy or medical supply store) or clean storage containers, like small canning jars with lids;
- A clean plastic freezer bag for storing the syringes.

## Before you get started

Wash your hands. Find somewhere comfortable to sit and begin by very gently massaging your breasts for around 30 seconds or so.

Begin by watching this [video](#).





## Press back

Lift your breast slightly. Place your fingers and thumb in a "C" shape about 5 cm (2 in) from your nipple. Press back to your chest wall, like you want to touch your ribs.



## Compress

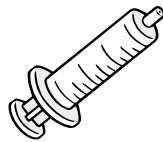
Bring your fingers and thumb together to gently compress the breast tissue. Be careful not to slide your fingers toward your nipple or pull the skin.



## Release

Release the compression. Check that your fingers are still in the starting "C" position. You can try moving your fingers to a different place on the breast. Repeat the process.

## Things to keep in mind



Don't expect to see any drops for several seconds. When the colostrum starts to flow, collect it into the clean cup or directly into the syringe, if the opening is large enough.

Begin with 3-5 minutes of expression on each breast, two to three times per day. Express from each breast at least twice but you can alternate between breasts many times throughout the 3-5 minutes. If you feel any cramping or contractions stop immediately.

## Storing the colostrum

Any colostrum collected during the same day can be stored in the same syringe, up to a maximum of 5mls or so. Place the syringe in the refrigerator between expression sessions. Label it with the date and your initials. At the end of the day, and place the syringe in a clean plastic freezer bag and place it in the freezer for up to 4 to 6 months.

If you don't have any syringes on hand the colostrum can be stored in a clean, sealed container in the freezer, like a small canning jar with a lid. The milk can be thawed and fed to your baby with a tiny spoon, syringe or medi-cup when the time comes.

When it comes time for your baby to be born, take the colostrum with you in a cooler surrounded by ice packs. The jars or syringes can be thawed quickly by placing them in lukewarm water or holding them in your hand. Any thawed syringes need to be used within 24 hours.

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