Expressing breastmilk before birth

Information for Women

Who should consider expressing colostrum before birth?

- Women who have diabetes before or during pregnancy – these babies have an increased chance of having low blood sugar levels and can benefit from having extra colostrum.
- If you are pregnant with twins/triplets.
- If your baby has been diagnosed with a cleft lip or palate or a medical condition which may affect their feeding.
- If your baby is needing to be born early.
- Women who have previously had a concern with their breastmilk supply.
- Women who have had breast surgery.

When and how often should you start expressing?

Generally from 36 weeks’ try to express some breastmilk.
Express between 3 to 10 minutes, one to two times a day if you have time.

How to hand express?

- Always wash your hands before expressing.
- Try expressing after a warm shower or place a warm cloth on your breast before expressing.
- Start by massaging your breast in small circles around the whole breast.
- Stroke, lean forward and gently shake your breast to help move the colostrum down towards the nipple.
- Place your thumb and first two fingers about 2-3cm from your nipple.
- Press your finger and thumb pads (not your fingertips) straight back towards your chest.
- Move your fingers and thumb towards each other (compress).
- Repeat steps – press back, together and release.
- Change the position of your fingers around the areola to get colostrum from all the milk ducts.
- Try not to squeeze or pinch your nipple.
- Collect any drops you see into a syringe.
- Try to express from each breast a few times every session if you have time.
How to store colostrum?

• Use a new syringe, each time your express.
• Write date on hospital sticky label and place on syringe.
• Place syringe into freezer using the hospital specimen bag which has your name on it.

Things to remember:

• Some women may not be able to collect any colostrum when pregnant – talk to your midwife if you have any problems.
• All syringes and the specimen bag must have your hospital label on them. Please let the staff know if you run out so we can help you.
• Keep your colostrum as cold as possible using an ‘ice block’ and cold bag when you come to the hospital.
• Give your syringe to a midwife when you arrive so they can place it in the freezer for you.

Need help or having trouble expressing?

Google: Youtube video The Joy Series Video 3 Antenatal hand expressing or scan QR Code

Call: Sunshine Coast University Hospital Lactation Consultant: 07 5202 7227