

## Expressing breast milk for your baby in the nursery

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We understand that having your baby admitted to a nursery can be extremely overwhelming and upsetting. The emotional support that you will need is just as important as the practical guidance. When you suffer shock, it's very hard to remember all the information that you are given. Try to speak frequently with the health professions who provide the different kinds of help, making sure you are getting all the support you need.

If your baby is sick or has been born early, your breast milk helps your baby to fight infections and receive the right nutrients to grow. Breast milk also reduces the risk of severe gut problems that very small or sick babies are more prone to developing. *Only you can provide your milk for your baby!*

### How to build a plentiful milk supply

Start hand expressing colostrum as soon as you can, within 1 hour after the birth of your baby is ideal.

Aim to express at least 8 -10 times a day, including at least once during the night when prolactin levels are highest.

Encourage milk flow by:

- Having a photo of the baby or expressing next to your baby or during kangaroo care
- Gentle breast massage
- Relax your shoulders and deep breathing
- You may find applying warmth to your breasts helps.
- Express 10-20 minutes from both breasts, swapping regularly at first.

### Look after yourself

- Eat a balanced diet include a wide variety of fruit and vegetables
- Drink to thirst (your urine should be clear)
- Rest – aim for one to two rests a day

### Kangaroo Care is awesome for you and your baby!

Once your baby is stable, you will be encouraged to have skin to skin contact. Research supports mothers having skin to skin contact (kangaroo care) as this promotes bonding and helps stimulate mothering hormones (oxytocin and prolactin) that help you to produce breast milk. This is special for you and your baby.

The research shows that your baby is less stressed and will gain weight more quickly. A baby's temperature, breathing and heart rate are generally more stable. Skin to skin contact provides comfort and security. It also helps the mother make more milk. The more the mother and baby are together this way often means earlier breastfeeding and discharge home.

For parents, it helps them to gain confidence and feel closer to their baby. **For more information see Kangaroo Care Fact sheet on Website**



### Breast massage and oxytocin hormone

Gentle breast massaging before and while expressing will help your milk to flow, increase the amount of milk you make and increase the fat content in your milk. This may help your baby to gain weight.

The milk flow (milk ejection reflex or let down) occurs with the release of the hormone oxytocin. You produce oxytocin when you are giving birth, feeding your baby, thinking about or touching your baby. Massaging your breasts or express your milk can help too.

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### How to express

Wash your hands with soap and water.

Massage your breasts in a gentle circular motion from the outer area working towards the nipple.

Put your thumb and finger opposite each other on the outer edge of your areola. This is the darkened area around your nipple.

- Gently squeeze backward in to the breast (not the nipple) between your thumb and finger together repeating in a rhythmic action (about once a second). This may feel uncomfortable but should not be painful.
- Collect in containers provided to you.
- When the flow stops you may move your finger and thumb to another position on the areola and repeat above steps.
- In the first few days, most women will express 1 drop – ½ ml – 2mls at an expression. However the more you express in the first couple of days the more milk you will make over the next 3 – 6 days. Colostrum (the first milk) is important as it helps to mature your baby's gut, protect against infection and provides essential nutrients. Even one to two drops (which is normal) will help your baby
- You can use the small drops for mouth care or ISOC (Immune Supportive Oral Care). Ask the neonatal nurse to guide you with this.
- It is important to continue expressing to help the milk flow. This may take time, like one to two days.
- Some women may not be able to express any milk at first as it may take longer for the early milk to flow
- Ask the midwife or nurse to watch and guide you as this is a skill that takes time to learn.

**Remember to express both breasts each time.**

**Oxytocin is the hormone that helps release your milk**

Prolactin is the main hormone involved in making milk. It takes 30 minutes of either breastfeeding or expressing for it to reach optimal levels and this helps to bring your milk in and helps to keep your supply up.

To watch the video clip about hand expressing, click on link:

<https://globalhealthmedia.org/portfolio-items/expressing-the-first-milk/>

**The more you express or feed today, the more milk you will make tomorrow.**

Remember short frequent sessions, 8-10 times a day, including once overnight will help you make enough for your baby.

Your milk making hormone 'prolactin' is released more at night, this is why it's so important to express during the night-time.

Example times:

|     |     |      |      |  |
|-----|-----|------|------|--|
| 4am | 7am | 10am |      |  |
| 1pm | 4pm | 7pm  | 10pm |  |

At first, you may need to express by hand until your milk comes in usually between the 3rd – 6th day.

Only expect small amounts. After the first day, **begin using an electric pump as well as hand expressing** as this is the best way to make more milk. Eventually when your milk increases you may find using a pump easier.

**The first two weeks is the most important time for your body learning to make enough milk in the future.**

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### Using electric and hand pumps:

- While it is good to start hand expressing, some women find it easier to use the electric pump even from the first day.
- Your midwife or neonatal nurse is available to show you how to use the pump.
- Wash your hands and then gently massage your breasts to stimulate the milk flow
- Place the breast cup over the nipple.
- If an electrical pump is being used, after turning on, it will start on a lower pressure setting.
- Use the vacuum button to increase the pressure as far as you can while not hurting you.
- If it's hurting, the pressure may be too high or the breast cup is too small.
- The pump set flange is available in larger sizes. Most chemists stock these or ask the midwife if using the hospital pump.
- When using an electric / hand pump, you will be encouraged to use come gentle breast compression.
- Once you are comfortable with expressing, expressing both breasts at the same time is possible (this is called double pumping).

### Choosing a breast pump: Manual or Electric?

**Manual hand pumps** are portable and usually cost less than an electric pump. Many types are available and should be used according to the instructions.

**Electric breast pumps** can be bought or hired from the Australian Breastfeeding Association or some chemists. Pump Hire Costs will include a refundable deposit and weekly hire. The breast pump kit to use with the pump is purchased separately. For long term expressing, most women find it cheaper to buy an electric pump.

Electric breast pumps are also available for use on the Postnatal Ward and the Neonatal Nursery.

### Care of the equipment

- After every use the pump kit must be rinsed, then washed in warm soapy water, rinsed well again and stored in a clean bag or container.
- Some hospitals recommend sterilizing the kit once every 24 hours.
- Expressing equipment must not be shared between mothers for the safety of your baby.

### Expressing at home

- Your breast milk must be put into the fridge after each expression. This is to ensure that your milk remains cold.

### Collection and storage of breast milk

- All breast milk containers must have a label with mother's and baby's name, baby's medical record number, date & time milk expressed
- Pre-printed Expressed Breast Milk labels can be collected from the maternity or nursery staff
- Breast milk can be safely stored in syringes or sealed containers, try to feed in order of expressing
- It is best to bring your milk in every day. If not your milk will need to be frozen. Discuss this with the nurse caring for your baby.

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### Transporting breast milk

- Bring your labelled milk (fresh or frozen) in an insulated container, such as cool bag with a frozen freezer brick or gel pack
- Frozen water (ice) is not cold enough to transport frozen breast milk
- Check your labelled milk with staff upon arrival who will place in the appropriate fridge or freezer
- Defrosted or partially defrosted milk **cannot be refrozen** and therefore must be fed to your baby or thrown away within 24 hours
- If you are having a problem with transporting your milk, please talk to the nurse/midwife caring for your baby

**For information on storing your breast milk, see Table 1 on page 6.**

### Breastfeeding your baby

In our neonatal nurseries we encourage all babies that are receiving breast milk to have their first sucking feed at the breast. Research has shown that breastfeeding is less stressful than bottle feeding and, where possible, all sucking feeds should be from the breast.

At first, your baby may only manage one or two breast feeds a day and may not suck strongly or for very long. All other feeds may be from a tube. As your baby's sucking ability improves, the number of sucking feeds per day will increase.

### Non-nutritive sucking

This is where your baby may suckle at your breast after you have expressed. Non-nutritive sucking helps your baby's gut to mature. **See the fact sheet about dummy use in the nursery.**

### How will you know that your baby is getting enough breast milk?

- Your baby will have a suck – suck – pause – suck pattern. The pause reflects the time to swallow milk and breathe
- Your baby will settle following the feed. The time the baby sleeps following a breast feed may be different from the time after a tube feed as the baby only takes from the breast what he/she needs
- Wet and dirty nappies. At least 6 soaked wet nappies per day after a week of age. In the first few weeks at home your baby will normally poo at least once a day
- Growing; there are several reasons a premature or sick baby may be slow to gain weight
- Your breasts may feel a little softer after the feed
- As a guide, when your baby attaches and sucks well (following the above pattern) for at least 10 – 15 minutes then falls asleep at the breast.
- You will feel thirsty and sleepy during or just after baby feeds. Have your water close by.

### Smoking, alcohol and other drugs

- Nicotine passes through the breast milk, therefore, get help to try and stop smoking. Avoid areas where others are smoking at least an hour prior to and during breast feeding/expressing. Smoking can also reduce your milk supply.
- Alcohol passes into breast milk, therefore, avoid alcohol especially if you are expressing for a baby that is unwell.
- Illicit drugs will transfer into your milk and may affect your baby, it is important to discuss this with the medical, nursing or midwifery staff caring for you and your baby.

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### Medications

Medications you require for your wellbeing may pass into your breast milk in different levels. Please check with the Midwife on the ward, the Nurse or the Doctor looking after your baby about the safety of these medications.

### Other issues

#### Mastitis

Mastitis is inflammation of the breast. The breast or parts of the breast become tender, painful, reddened and hard. Please see Mastitis Fact Sheet on the Website for help.

#### Low milk supply

There are two concerns:

**Not enough milk comes in:** the most common reason for a delay in milk coming in is not expressing regularly in the first 2-3 days. It is important to express at least 8-10 times every day including at least once during the night

**Decreasing supply of milk:** the most common reason your supply has dropped is longer gaps between expressions. There is a hormone in the milk that tells the breast to reduce the amount its making if expressing is delayed.

Simply go back to expressing at least 7- 8 times in 24 hours and at least 15 minutes on each side. There is also medication (Motilium) that your doctor can prescribe that helps if you are expressing or breastfeeding the baby and your supply is low. Ask your nurse or midwife for the handout about this medication.

### Helpful tips:

- Hold a baby blanket or baby clothes next to your face and smell your baby while you express
- Look at a photo of your baby (with you if possible) while you express
- Find a private relaxing place to express or next to your baby
- Try to express before and immediately after Kangaroo Care (or during Kangaroo Care)

If you have any questions please ask the midwives, the nurses in the nursery and/or-

**Australian Breastfeeding Association**

**Ph.1800 686 2 686**

**[www.breastfeeding.asn.au](http://www.breastfeeding.asn.au)**

**Mothersafe – medications in pregnancy and lactation service 93826539 or 1800 647848 for information about your medications or other drugs in relation to breastfeeding and your baby.**

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**Table 1: Storing your breast milk**

| Breast Milk   | Room Temperature (26 degrees Celsius or lower)  | Refrigerator (4 degrees Celsius or lower)  | Freezer   |
|---|---|--|---|
| Freshly expressed into a closed container               | When expressing for your baby in the hospital, your milk needs to be refrigerated as soon as possible after completing the expression | When your baby is in hospital 48 hours.<br><br>Store in the back of the fridge, where it is coolest.<br><br>At home store for up to 3 days | 2 weeks in freezer compartment inside refrigerator (-15°C).<br><br>3 months in freezer section of refrigerator with separate door (-18°C)<br><br>6 to 12 months in a chest or manual defrost deep freezer that is opened infrequently and maintains ideal temperature (-20°C) |
| Previously frozen thawed in refrigerator but not warmed | 4 hours or less   | Use within 24 hours  | Do not refreeze   |
| Thawed outside refrigerator in warm water               | Use straight away do not store  | 4 hours or until next feeding  | Do not refreeze   |
| Baby has begun feeding                                  | Discard when the feed is finished   | Discard  | Discard   |

### Transporting breast milk

- Store your milk in an insulated container, such as a cool bag with a frozen ice brick or gel pack
- If you are transporting frozen milk, do not use frozen water (ice) as it is not cold enough to use breast milk which is thawed or partially thawed cannot be refrozen and therefore must be fed to your baby or thrown out within 24 hours.