

Guidelines for Expressing Breastmilk

You may need to express milk for a number of reasons such as:

- separation from your baby (prematurity, sickness, returning to work, or an outing)
- your baby is having difficulty attaching to the breast
- to increase milk supply
- to clear blocked ducts or mastitis

Hand Expressing

It is important to learn how to hand express before hospital discharge. Your midwife will help you with this.

Hand expressing is readily available, convenient, no cost & effective. It assists with increasing fat content and maintaining adequate volumes of milk.

Hand expressing is particularly useful before the milk comes in, or at any other time.

If your baby is not able to breastfeed, begin as soon as possible after birth.

Expressing frequently (8-10 times in 24 hours incl overnight) will help establish and maintain your milk supply.

The amount of colostrum expressed may vary from a few drops to a few mls. As colostrum changes to mature milk, the volume will gradually increase to around 600-800ml over 24 hours. Individual amounts will vary.

Technique



- Wash hands
- Massage breasts briefly

Technique (continued)

- Have a clean/sterile container handy
- Place thumb and forefinger on opposite sides of the areola
- Press fingers inwards towards the breast then compress fingers together
- Use a rhythmic rolling action, taking care not to slide fingers on the breast tissue
- Compression triggers the letdown. This will be assisted by privacy, comfort and relaxation techniques
- Move fingers around the areola as milk flow slows
- If no milk is flowing then check your technique and adjust as necessary
- Hand express for 5 -10 minutes or until flow slows to a drip
- Repeat on the other breast

Guidelines for storage of breastmilk at home

Breastmilk status	Room temperature (26 deg C or less)	Refrigerator (4 degC or less)	Freezer
Freshly expressed into container	6-8 hours If refrigerator is available store milk there	3-5 days Store at the back where it is coldest	2 weeks in freezer compartment in refrigerator 3 months in freezer section of refrigerator with separate door 6-12 months in deep freeze (-18degC or lower)
Previously frozen, thawed in refrigerator but not warmed	4 hours or less - that is, next feeding	24 hours	Do not refreeze
Thawed outside refrigerator in warm water	For completion of feeding	4 hours or until next feeding	Do not refreeze
Infant has begun feeding	Only for completion of feeding	Discard	Discard

References:

The Women's Clinical Practice Guidelines

Mercy Hospital for Women Breastfeeding Protocol

ABA Guide lines for storage of Breastmilk