

Expressing breast milk when your baby is on the Neonatal Unit or Transitional Care

Information for
mums



How to use this leaflet

This leaflet is intended to give you advice and support while you are establishing a milk supply for your baby(s). Please keep it with you (like your hand held maternity notes).

There is a checklist on pages 8-10 that you might want to fill in to ensure that you have received the information that you need, and check that your expressing is progressing as it should.

The daily record

The daily record, starting on page 11 is for you to record how many times you express your breast milk and the volume you obtain.

Remember, even if your baby is taking tiny amounts of your breast milk now, they will need more as they get bigger.

Research has shown that the more milk you are producing two weeks after your baby is born, the better your long term supply will be.

This is why we encourage you to express so frequently in the first two weeks

It is normal for the amounts you express to vary over the day - it is the total volume over 24 hours that is important.

Why is breast milk best for baby?

One of the best things that you (and only you) can do for your baby at this time is to provide your breastmilk.

When a baby is on the Neonatal Unit, breast milk will work better than most medicines to protect them against infections. It also contains ingredients which help their gut to mature and prepare it to receive larger volumes of milk that they will need to thrive.

Breast milk can reduce the risk of your baby having long term problems including those of the eyes and lungs. It is also important for the development of the brain.

Even if you do not plan to breast feed, we would ask you to consider expressing breast milk for your baby while they are in hospital, in order to give them the best opportunity to progress.



How do I express breast milk?

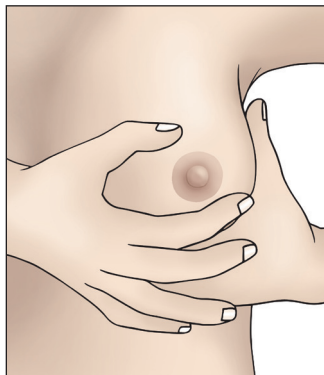
- A member of staff will show you how to hand express your breast milk within a couple of hours of giving birth.
- Hand expressing works best to stimulate your breast milk hormones so that you can have a better milk supply.

When do I need to express?

- In the first two weeks, or until your baby starts to breastfeed, you need to express at least 8-12 times over 24 hours, including at night.
- You can cluster express, which means express frequently with short gaps between each session when it's convenient, and have longer gaps at other times when you're busy.
- Do not leave more than a six hour gap between expressions.
- At around 2-3 days after having your baby, the volumes you produce will be increasing, and the staff will show you how to use an electric pump.
- If you set up a good supply in the first few weeks you can then be a bit more flexible about when and how much you express. By then it should not affect your supply if you give yourself a break on the odd day, and do less than eight sessions!

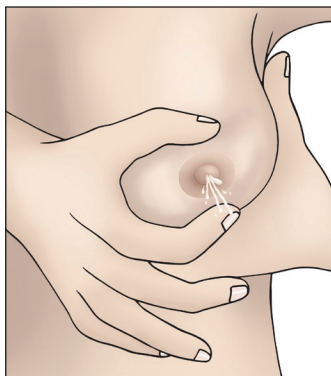
How do I hand express?

1. Have a small syringe or clean sterilised container to hand before you start.
2. Cup your breast and position your fingers in a c shape, placing your thumb and finger about 3cm from the base of the nipple.
3. Gently squeeze this area and then release.
4. Repeat this to build up a rhythm. Avoid sliding your fingers over the skin.



The amount of milk you get will be small at first, sometimes just a few drops glistening at the nipple, but keep going as with practice and time it will help build up your supply.

5. When the flow slows down, move your fingers round the breast to try to section of your breast and repeat. When the flow slows 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 gentle breast massage.

What helps?

Oxytocin is a hormone that you and your baby make when you feel relaxed, secure and loved. Babies benefit from high levels of oxytocin as it helps their brain to grow and for them to develop into a happy baby. Oxytocin is also really important in reducing stress hormones and encouraging your milk to flow well.



To increase oxytocin levels

- Take some time to prepare for expressing – breast massage and nipple rolling beforehand will help the milk to flow more easily. If you're using the pump, still hand express before you start.
- Try using relaxation techniques as stress and tension can make pumping less productive.
- Engage as many senses as possible. If you are in hospital, express at your baby's bedside. Look at a picture of your baby, inhale your baby's scent from a recently worn article of clothing or a bonding square.
- Spend as much time as you can with your baby, skin to skin. This helps you to get to know each other, reduces stress levels in both of you and helps stabilise your baby.

It is also really important that you know how to use the breast pump and pumping effectively

- Someone should show you how to work the pump properly and ensure it is set up correctly.
- If you feel any pain or discomfort when expressing it might be that you need a different shield size.
- Try pumping both your breasts at the same time. 'Double pumping' can increase the amount of milk you produce and it takes less time.

Staff will carry out at least four expressing assessments over the first two weeks to check if you need any help.

The checklist on page 8 provides suggestions for film clips that can be accessed via the "Baby Buddy" app or the "Small Wonders" DVD. Please ask a member of staff if you would like to access them.

There are also a number of other useful film clips for expressing, breastfeeding and relationship building, that you can access via the Baby Friendly Initiative website: www.unicef.org.uk and the "Best Beginnings" website: www.bestbeginnings.org.uk

Record of discussions

Discussions you will have with staff	✓
The importance of breast milk for the preterm baby:	
• Reduced risk of NEC	
• Reduced risk of infection	
• Improved improved digestion of feeds	
• Improved brain development	
The importance of early and frequent hand expressing	
Staff will check with you, or the ward you are staying on to make sure you start expressing as soon as possible after delivery.	
Small Wonders DVD – prompt:	
• Chapter 3 - 'First Hours'	
• Chapter 4 - 'Expressing breast milk'	
Staff will need to confirm that any medication you are on is safe for use while breastfeeding/ expressing?	
On your first visit to the unit	
Staff will confirm that you feel confident with breast massage and hand expressing, and find help if you are having problems	
Staff will check that the importance of frequent milk expression has been explained to you;	
• 8-12 times in 24hrs (including once at night)	
• Cluster expressing	
• No gaps between expressing more than 6 hours	

Discussions you will have with staff	✓
On day 2-3	
Staff will perform an expressing assessment and:	
• check that your breast milk volumes are increasing	
• make sure that you have been orientated to the neonatal unit including expressing rooms and the milk kitchen	
• make sure that the use of breast pump has been demonstrated to you, including double pumping	
• make sure that safe collection and storage of expressed breast milk is explained	
• check you have access to a breast pump when discharged from hospital	
Day 4-6	
Staff will perform an expressing assessment and check that the volumes of milk you are expressing are increasing	
Day 7-11	
Staff will perform an expressing assessment and check that you are expressing larger volumes of breast milk	
Day 12-14	
Staff will perform an expressing assessment and check that your milk production is being maintained and continuing to increase	

Discussions you will have with staff	✓
If you are having any problems with expressing	
<p>If you are having any difficulties the staff will be able to provide some basic advice and refer you to a member of the Infant Feeding team for support.</p> <p>Page 6 of this leaflet provides some tips on how to improve your milk supply.</p>	
Staff might ask for your consent	
<p>If you don't have enough breast milk available for a feed, staff will discuss with you whether it would be appropriate for your baby to have donor breast milk or formula. This will be supported with a discussion regarding any risks of using alternatives to breast milk, and the individual reasons why we might think it appropriate for your baby.</p>	
<p>If you or the staff think a teat or dummy should be used staff will have a discussion with you about your baby's needs.</p> <p>Leaflet received:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Dummies and non-nutritive sucking' 	

Daily record

Day one

Helpful tips

Colostrum comes in very small amounts and every drop is precious. That's why hand expressing is so important, so nothing is wasted.

If your baby isn't taking feeds at the moment, they will benefit from, and enjoy, having mouthcare using your breast milk.

Today's date:

Number of expressions	Start time	End time	Total mls produced
One			
Two			
Three			
Four			
Five			
Six			
Seven			
Eight			
Nine			
Ten			
Eleven			
Twelve			

Day two

How are things going?

A member of staff should be checking in with you to make sure you feel confident with breast massage and hand expressing. They will show you around the Neonatal Unit so you know where the expressing rooms are and what to do with your expressed breast milk.

Today's date:

Number of expressions	Start time	End time	Total mls produced
One			
Two			
Three			
Four			
Five			
Six			
Seven			
Eight			
Nine			
Ten			
Eleven			
Twelve			

Day three

Helpful tips

It's a good time to start using the electric breast pump as the amount of milk you are making will be increasing. Staff will show you how to use the pump and make sure that the funnels fit correctly.

Today's date:

Number of expressions	Start time	End time	Total mls produced
One			
Two			
Three			
Four			
Five			
Six			
Seven			
Eight			
Nine			
Ten			
Eleven			
Twelve			

Day four

Helpful tips

Keep snacks close by - it will stop you missing meals and provide you with energy. Expressing and breastfeeding mothers can get free meals. A member of staff will be able to tell you how to get these.

Today's date:

Number of expressions	Start time	End time	Total mls produced
One			
Two			
Three			
Four			
Five			
Six			
Seven			
Eight			
Nine			
Ten			
Eleven			
Twelve			

Day five

A member of staff will perform an expressing assessment with you to see how expressing is going.

Today's date:

Number of expressions	Start time	End time	Total mls produced
One			
Two			
Three			
Four			
Five			
Six			
Seven			
Eight			
Nine			
Ten			
Eleven			
Twelve			

Day six

Helpful tips

Don't forget that it is really important to express at least once in the night. Try having a glass of water before you go to bed and express when you get up for the toilet!

Today's date:

Number of expressions	Start time	End time	Total mls produced
One			
Two			
Three			
Four			
Five			
Six			
Seven			
Eight			
Nine			
Ten			
Eleven			
Twelve			

Day seven

Helpful tips

Everyone has good days and bad days. It would be nice if your baby could progress without any setbacks. Some days will be better than others. Be reassured that your baby is being cared for 24 hours a day.

No question is a stupid question. The staff will be happy to answer any queries you have.

Today's date:

Number of expressions	Start time	End time	Total mls produced
One			
Two			
Three			
Four			
Five			
Six			
Seven			
Eight			
Nine			
Ten			
Eleven			
Twelve			

Day eight

Helpful tips

Staff will find you a comfortable chair to sit on when you are close to your baby's cot or incubator. They can also get screens for you if you would like to express at the bedside.

Today's date:

Number of expressions	Start time	End time	Total mls produced
One			
Two			
Three			
Four			
Five			
Six			
Seven			
Eight			
Nine			
Ten			
Eleven			
Twelve			

Day nine

Helpful tips

Expressing for a baby on the neonatal unit can feel relentless. Once you've established a good supply after the first 14 days, you can often reduce frequency of expressing a little without affecting your supply.

Today's date:

Number of expressions	Start time	End time	Total mls produced
One			
Two			
Three			
Four			
Five			
Six			
Seven			
Eight			
Nine			
Ten			
Eleven			
Twelve			

Day ten

A member of staff will perform an expressing assessment with you to see how expressing is going.

Today's date:

Number of expressions	Start time	End time	Total mls produced
One			
Two			
Three			
Four			
Five			
Six			
Seven			
Eight			
Nine			
Ten			
Eleven			
Twelve			

Day eleven

Today's date:

Number of expressions	Start time	End time	Total mls produced
One			
Two			
Three			
Four			
Five			
Six			
Seven			
Eight			
Nine			
Ten			
Eleven			
Twelve			

**Be really proud of yourself,
you're doing a wonderful job**

Day twelve

Today's date:

Number of expressions	Start time	End time	Total mls produced
One			
Two			
Three			
Four			
Five			
Six			
Seven			
Eight			
Nine			
Ten			
Eleven			
Twelve			

Day thirteen

Today's date:

Number of expressions	Start time	End time	Total mls produced
One			
Two			
Three			
Four			
Five			
Six			
Seven			
Eight			
Nine			
Ten			
Eleven			
Twelve			

Day fourteen

A member of staff will perform an expressing assessment with you to see how expressing is going.

Today's date:

Number of expressions	Start time	End time	Total mls produced
One			
Two			
Three			
Four			
Five			
Six			
Seven			
Eight			
Nine			
Ten			
Eleven			
Twelve			

Using breast pumps at home

If your baby remains in hospital and you are going home, it is important that you continue to express your breast milk. Staff will provide you with a hand pump to keep to use while you are at home.

If you are expressing frequently, you may find it easier to express using an electric pump.

Your midwife, Health Visitor or Children's Centre will be able to see if there are any breast pumps available for you, locally. If you have come from another Neonatal Unit they may also be able to provide you with an electric pump.

Some companies can hire electric pumps to you, at a charge. More information about expressing breast milk and breast pumps can be found from the websites or telephone numbers listed on the back page.

Staff will also be happy to give more information or support - please ask.

Moving on to breastfeeding

From around 32-34 weeks, your baby will be able to start to manage sucking, swallowing and breathing at the same time. However you can start to gain confidence in holding your baby for feeds and getting to know each other long before this.

When your baby is in their cot or incubator, or in skin to skin contact, you might notice them turn their head, open their mouth or poke out their tongue. These are feeding cues and show that it might be a good time for them to try a lick or nuzzle at the breast. It can take time for babies to progress to full breastfeeding, particularly if they have been born early.

The more opportunities you get to put your baby to the breast when they are showing they are ready, the easier it will be to move on.

Staff will support and talk to you about a plan of care suited to your baby's individual needs.

Useful Contact Details

NCT Breastfeeding helpline

0300 330 0771 www.nct.org.uk

La Leche League

0845 120 2918 www.laleche.org.uk

Association of Breastfeeding Mothers

08444 122 949 www.abm.me.uk

Breastfeeding Network

0300 100 0210 www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk

National Breastfeeding Helpline

0300 100 0212 www.breastfeeding.nhs.uk

BLISS for preterm babies

0500 618140 www.bliss.org

Best Beginnings

www.bestbeginnings.org.uk

TAMBA Twins and Multiple Births Association

www.tamba.org.uk

Haamla Service

0113 206 5477

Infant Feeding Team

0113 206 5367

*Ask a member of staff for an up-to-date flyer of
'Breastfeeding Support Groups'*



Acknowledgements

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