

Colostrum Hand Expression Kit

This handout provides instructions on how to hand express and collect colostrum at the end of your pregnancy.

Colostrum collection using hand expression can start at 36 weeks of pregnancy. Any collected colostrum can be stored in syringes and frozen at home. When it is time to come to the hospital to have your baby bring the syringes and store them in the fridge in your patient room. They may be stored in the fridge for up to three days.

Your kit contains:

- 5 colostrum collection syringes with caps
- 2 blue top colostrum collection cups
- 1 bag to store collected syringes for transportation to hospital

Learn How To Hand Express

Learning how to hand express takes practice. Watch Dr. Jane Morton's real life video to help you learn. Visit: firstdroplets.com

Steps of the process:

1. Make a C with your hand (as if you're holding a cup), place your hand on your breast and push your hand back against your ribcage.
2. Bring your thumb and index finger together and compress the nipple. This will start to stimulate your milk production. Relax your hand and then repeat this process again. Your hand should be compressing your breast rhythmically with frequent compressions.
3. Use the blue lid colostrum collection cup to collect the expressed colostrum. Once collected, use the syringe to store the colostrum by placing the tip of the syringe in the collection cup and pulling back on the plunger of the syringe. Cap the syringe with the purple stopper before placing it into the freezer.

If your baby needs this colostrum while you are in the hospital your nurse will help you learn how to feed it to your baby. It is recommended to empty the colostrum on to a spoon to feed your baby.

What to Expect

It is normal to collect a total of 0 to 5 ml of colostrum for the entire collection period. The collection period can be from 36 weeks until birth.

Some people are able to produce many drops of colostrum and some people may only see a few small drops. Both are normal in pregnancy and are not indications of your future milk production.

If you don't see many drops during expression, know that you are still activating important milk making receptors in your breast as well as learning a valuable skill you will use when your baby is born.

If you start to experience any uterine cramping during hand expression please stop expressing immediately and connect with your pregnancy care provider.

When you Express

Start practicing expression in the shower to help you learn how to move your hand. Once the colostrum starts dripping, start collecting! It is normal for it to take a week of practice before you are easily able to collect these small drops in the blue top collection container.

- Colostrum can be collected 2-3 times each day using the same syringe. Cap the syringe and store it in the fridge between collections.
- At the end of the collecting day place the capped syringe inside the freezer in the provided plastic bag. Even if the syringe is not completely full still freeze the collected drops.
- All supplies, such as the blue top collection container, can be washed with warm water and dish soap and left to air dry.
- If you were able to collect colostrum bring your frozen colostrum syringes to the hospital. It is normal to have syringes that are only half filled or less.
- Place your frozen colostrum in the fridge located in your patient room.

If you have any questions about hand expression and colostrum collection please contact our lactation consultants at lactationconsultant@providencehealth.bc.ca.

