



Lactation University Volunteer Support Program

Trac 1: Prenatal Meetings

Theme: Prenatal and Early Postpartum Milk Removal

Providing Human Milk to Human Babies

OBJECTIVES:

1. Attendees will be able to demonstrate manual/hand expression
2. Attendees will be able to explain why removing milk is important
3. Attendees will be able to share 2 reasons someone may want to harvest colostrum

Education: What is colostrum?

Colostrum is the first breast milk your body makes. It is the perfect source of nutrition for your baby because it:

- Contains antibodies which protect your baby from infection and helps their immune system to develop.
- Helps your baby's digestive system to develop, which protects your baby from allergies.
- Encourages your baby to open their bowels and pass 'meconium' (your baby's first black sticky poo) which reduces the risk of jaundice.
- Colostrum is very concentrated. At birth, a baby's stomach is about the size of a marble, so they will only need a small amount of colostrum to receive all the nutrients they need.

Education: What are the benefits of colostrum harvesting?

There are lots of benefits to colostrum harvesting.

- You learn how to hand express which will give you confidence to continue hand expressing after birth if you need to.
- You begin to know the anatomy of your breasts and where your milk ducts are.
- You have expressed milk ready to give your baby after birth if your baby is at high risk of low blood sugar, are reluctant to feed, or are separated from you.
- Hand expressing before birth gets your milk production off to a good start.

Education: Effective Hand Expression

In many countries, people rely on hand-expression rather than a pump to remove their breastmilk. It is important to have this skill, so if your baby needs a little supplement, you know how to retrieve the milk in your very own breasts. There is not one way to remove milk by hand expression. The best way is the method that works for you. A few guidelines can be helpful.

- Place your hand in a "C" position on the breast
- Place 2 or 3 fingers below the nipple (at the 6 o'clock position) and your thumb above the nipple (at the 12 o'clock position).
- The fingers and thumb should be the same distance from the nipple and across from each other
- The motion is meant to replicate the rhythm of the baby at the breast
- Press back towards the chest wall, compress the fingers and thumb in a rolling motion and then release

- When the milk flow slows down, move your fingers and thumb around to a different area of the breast and hand express again.
- When the flow begins to slow again, move onto the other breast, and repeat.
- Keep changing breasts until the milk flow is becoming slower or stops.

Please note: If you cannot see any colostrum when trying to hand express, move your fingers/ thumb slightly towards the nipple or further away. You can also try to massage around the breast, this can help stimulate your milk production.

Watching several videos can be helpful

- Global Health Media <https://globalhealthmedia.org/videos/how-to-express-breastmilk/>
- Maya Bolman Hand Expression <https://vimeo.com/65196007>
- First Droplets Hand Expression <https://vimeo.com/291805110>
- Baby Friendly Hand Expression <https://www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly/baby-friendly-resources/breastfeeding-resources/hand-expression-video/>

Expression should not be painful. Avoid pinching the nipple. Practice and learn a technique that works best for you.

Education: Harvesting Colostrum

It is usually safe to collect colostrum at 38 weeks of pregnancy. Some health care professionals will suggest sooner (after 36 weeks) if their patient is scheduled for an induction, pregnant with multiples or has gestational diabetes. Talk to your health care provider before harvesting colostrum.

Education: Storing Colostrum

When harvesting your colostrum, begin each day with a new syringe or collection device and after each expression place the syringe back in the fridge during that day. You can add collections to the same syringe and collect up to 3 times a day for up to 20 minutes (switching between breasts every 5 minutes). At the end of the day, place the collections in the freezer.

Clearly label colostrum with your name, the date and time you expressed. Your individual syringes can be stored together in a freezer bag.

If you are booked to have an induction of labor or caesarean, in the 2 to 3 days before, do not freeze the colostrum but instead put it in the fridge. This will lengthen the amount of time the colostrum can be used, as once defrosted the colostrum should be used within 12 hours.

If you go to the hospital in spontaneous labor, it may be more beneficial to only take some of the colostrum to the hospital and leave the rest in your freezer at home until required after birth, as this will prevent colostrum having to be discarded if it is defrosted for longer than 12 hours. Once you have had your baby, your birthing partner may go home to collect the rest of the colostrum you have hand expressed.

Education: Spoon/cup feeding, syringe usage

Suggested Teaching Techniques: Demonstrate hand expression with breast model, Show supplemental devices, videos of spoon/cup feeding, harvesting colostrum