

Expressing Colostrum Before Birth

Colostrum [kuh-LOSS-trum] is known as baby's "first milk." It is available just before and in the first few days after giving birth, before breastmilk comes in. Some healthy women who are at least 37 weeks into their pregnancy can begin expressing and storing their colostrum before their baby is born. Studies show that expressing colostrum before birth appears to be safe and does not usually cause preterm labor or other problems.

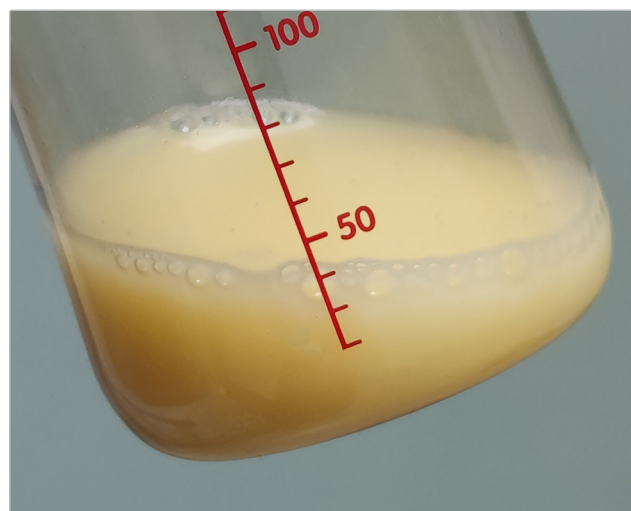
Why is it important to breastfeed with colostrum and milk?

Breast milk provides all the nutrition a baby needs to support their developing immune (disease-fighting) system. The benefits are even greater for babies born early, compared to formula feeding. Babies with certain medical conditions are helped by extra colostrum feedings in their first week of life, especially those born to mothers with **type 1** or **gestational diabetes** (diabetes diagnosed during pregnancy).

In addition, expressing milk before giving birth may mean that you don't have to supplement with formula. Your baby will have human milk available for those first feedings and during the hospital stay. Expressing before birth also improves your ability to exclusively breastfeed your baby during the first 3 months, and improves breastfeeding success overall.

What are the risks of expressing colostrum before birth?

Expressing does not usually cause preterm labor, but it's important to understand the signs of preterm labor and know when contact your provider with questions or concerns. It is important to discuss the idea of expressing before birth with your pregnancy provider before you start doing it. Also, wait until you are at least 37 weeks pregnant.



How do I express my colostrum before birth?

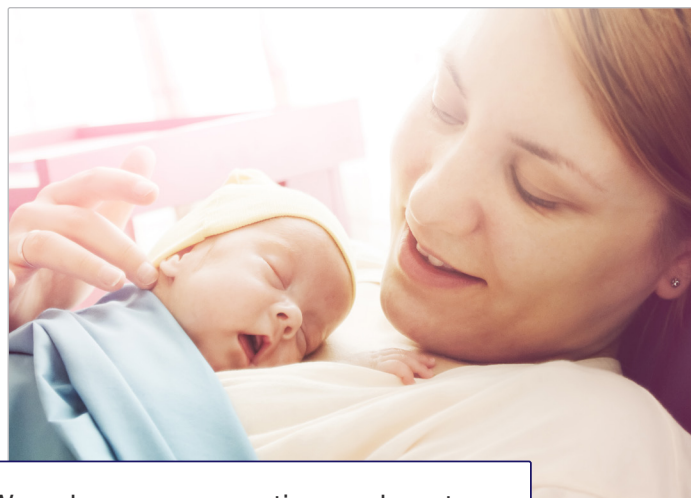
Hand expression is the most common way to collect colostrum. Your provider can give you instructions or refer you to videos on hand expression. Your colostrum can be stored in the freezer, or in the refrigerator for up to 48 hours before it is frozen. Be sure to label each container of colostrum you store with the date and time the colostrum was expressed. **If you experience any cramping or abdominal (belly) pains, STOP right away.**

What do I do with my stored colostrum when I get to the hospital?

Bring your colostrum to the hospital in a cooler or insulated bag with ice packs to keep it frozen during your labor and delivery. Once your baby is born, you will need to label each container with a barcode ID before storing your milk in the freezer or refrigerator.

What if my baby needs more colostrum or milk than I can provide?

Because of the many health benefits to mom and baby, Intermountain Healthcare encourages new mothers to feed their babies breastmilk only. If your baby needs more colostrum feedings than you have, they can have pasteurized human milk (PHM) available at all Intermountain facilities. These human milk products can be used to feed your newborn infant for the first 7 days of life, or longer as medically necessary, to provide your baby with an exclusive human milk diet.



We welcome your questions and want to hear any concerns you may have about breastfeeding, your breastfeeding (lactation) specialists, consultants, or nurses, and are here to support you and your newborn.

Questions for my pregnancy provider

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