

## How to store colostrum

Your maternity hospital will give you colostrum collection containers or syringes. Use the containers from your hospital. Do not use any other containers, which may not be safe.

## Store in the fridge between uses

You can use the same container to collect colostrum throughout the day.

You will need to store the container in the fridge in between uses.

## Label the date and time

1. Get a pen, zip-lock freezer bag and 2 stickers with your name and hospital number from your chart.
2. Write on the stickers:
  - today's date
  - time of the first expression collected
3. Place 1 label on the container and 1 label on the bag.

## Freeze at the end of the day

Place the container into a zip-lock freezer bag at the end of the day. Put the bag into the freezer.

Your midwife will tell you when to bring the containers to the hospital.

### Important:

For transporting to hospital, place the zip-lock bag with refrigerated or frozen colostrum containers into an insulated cooler bag with frozen ice packs. Hand over to staff as soon as you arrive at the hospital. They will safely store it in a fridge or freezer.

## How long can I store colostrum in a fridge or freezer?

Room temperature	Fridge	Freezer
Freshly expressed into closed container		
If below 20 <sup>o</sup> Celsius for up to 4 hours.	At or below 4 <sup>o</sup> Celsius for up to 5 to 7 days.	Freezer compartment inside a fridge for 2 weeks.
If a fridge is available, store milk in the fridge.	Store in the back of the fridge where it is coldest.	In a fridge -freezer for 3 to 6 months.
	If baby in hospital, use within 3 days.	In a deep freezer for up to 12 months.
Previously frozen and thawed in the fridge		
4 hours or less. For example, until next feed.	Store in the fridge for 24 hours.	Do not refreeze.
Thawed outside the fridge		
4 hours or less. For example, until next feed.	Hold for 4 hours or until the next feed.	Do not refreeze.
The baby has started feeding		
Do not use for feeding later. May use for baby's bath.	Do not refrigerate. May use for baby's bath.	Do not refreeze.

### Your local breastfeeding support contact details:

Published by: Health Service Executive  
Publication date: Sept 2025  
Review date: Sept 2027  
Order code: HNP 01859



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## How to express colostrum during pregnancy



## Benefits of expressing colostrum

Learning the skill of hand expressing helps develop your confidence with breastfeeding.

Collected colostrum can be given to the baby if there is a need for additional milk after birth. For example, if you have diabetes or a caesarean section. This may avoid the need for your baby to have formula.

**Every drop  
makes a difference**



## What colostrum is

Colostrum is sometimes called 'liquid gold'. Your body starts to make milk from around 16 weeks into pregnancy. It continues to make colostrum during the few days after the birth of your baby.

It is normal to have only tiny amounts. Colostrum may be dark yellow to clear in colour. It is not unusual to have a green, brown or blood-stained look. Contact your midwife if you don't see any colostrum after expressing for a few days.

## When to start expressing

Always talk to your midwife, lactation consultant or doctor before starting to express. They can give you advice for your individual situation.

### Generally, you:

- can start expressing at 37 weeks of pregnancy
- can begin with 3 to 5 minutes of expressing on each breast. Do this **2 or 3 times** a day
- should stop expressing immediately if you are having contractions at any time.

Talk to your midwife or doctor before expressing if you have any of the following conditions:

- A stitch in your cervix.
- Bleeding during the second or third trimester.
- A low-lying placenta.
- Your baby is not in a head-down position.
- Your baby has too much amniotic fluid around them.

## How to use harvested colostrum

You will be supported to have skin-to-skin contact with your baby in the first 1 to 2 hours following birth. This includes after caesarean births, if possible.

Breastfeeding is encouraged and should be unrestricted.

You will be encouraged to express some colostrum to give to your baby if your baby is:

- experiencing difficulties, or
- uninterested in breastfeeding at this time.

You will be given help to do this if needed.

You may also use any colostrum you have brought into the hospital with you.

You and your baby will be supported with a further feeding plan if:

- your baby continues to experience difficulty with feeding at the breast, or
- there is a concern about their blood glucose levels.

## How to hand express

### 1. Wash your hands

Always wash your hands before expressing.

### 2. Use warmth to get started

We suggest expressing after a bath or shower. The warmth may assist the flow of colostrum. You can also put a warm compress on your breasts.

### 3. Gentle massage

Start with a gentle breast massage. Stroke from the back of your breast towards the nipple. This helps the flow of colostrum.

### 4. Get hands in position

Your fingers should be well back from your nipple, on the outside of your areola. They should not tug or drag on your nipple.

### 5. Press, compress and release

Gently **press** your finger and thumb pads (not your fingertips) back toward the chest wall into the breast tissue, then press and hold fingers together for a few seconds (**compress**).



Press



Compress



Release

Repeat this process in a rhythm (**press-compress-release**). Do not squeeze or pinch your nipple.

### 6. Collect in a container

Collect the colostrum in the container provided by your maternity hospital.

Do not use electric or manual breast pumps for expressing. Colostrum is thick, sticky and only a small quantity is produced during pregnancy.