

Defrosting and Using Expressed Breast Milk

Guidelines for storing expressed breast milk

Storage Conditions	Storage Time	Comments
Room temperature (< 26°C)	4 hours	Cover containers and keep them as cool as possible
Refrigerated – fridges should operate at 2-4 °C	48 hours	Store milk in the back of the main body of the fridge
Frozen Freezer box in refrigerator	2 weeks	Store milk toward the back of the freezer, where the temperature is most constant
Separate door fridge/freezer	3-6 months	
Separate deep-freeze	6-12 months	

- Frozen expressed breast milk can be thawed in the refrigerator overnight and will only last for 24hrs. Or by placing the container in warm water until the milk has thawed this will last for a maximum of 4hrs at room temperature (thawed breast milk cannot be refrozen).
- **Expressed breast milk should not be thawed or heated using a microwave** because: microwaving destroys some of the milk's immunological components there is a risk of uneven heating and scalding.
- Before feeding your baby, you should swirl the container of milk to mix the fat portion back in and distribute the heat evenly.
- You should **test the temperature** of the milk by shaking a few drops on the inside of your wrist. It should feel comfortably warm to the touch before being given to the infant.

References

Sue Cox

Expressing and Storing Colostrum Antenatally for Use in the Newborn Period. Issues 17 (1) Apr/May2007

Dr Jane Morton

<http://newborns.stanford.edu/Breastfeeding/HandExpression.html>

NZ Ministry of Health

Guidelines for Storage of Breastmilk.

Thanks to Otago maternity for the use of this document.

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Expressing Colostrum Antenatally



Women's Health,
Auckland District Health Board

Welcome *Haere Mai* | Respect *Manaaki*
Together *Tūhono* | Aim High *Angamua*

Purpose

To prepare for your baby's arrival.

For situations such as an expected early birth, medical condition or previous breastfeeding difficulties.

If you have diabetes in pregnancy.

Your baby may be at risk of low blood sugars immediately after birth. Your colostrum along with breastfeeding will help baby maintain blood sugar levels.

Colostrum provides human antibodies.

This protects baby's digestive system and is the most important first food for all babies. Although it is available in small amounts, it is a powerful food!

How to hand express

- Start at 36-40 weeks
- Remember to clean your hands and the receiver
- Aim to express by hand for 3-5 mins each side, 3-4 times per day

Your midwife will show you how to hand express to collect your colostrum.

www.stanford.edu keywords: *Hand Expressing Milk* - to view a how-to video

With clean hands gently massage your breast(s) first. Press your fingers and thumb inwards towards your ribs. Press your breast together, compress and then release, slowing getting into a rhythm to produce a flow. Press well away from the nipple.



Some women have little colostrum, some have lots. Don't give up – it often gets easier the closer to term.

1. Draw colostrum up in a syringe either directly from the nipple or a spoon and store in the fridge
2. Add to syringe over the next 2 days
3. Label each syringe with date and freeze in a named zip lock bag **within 48 hours of expressing**
4. Bring frozen syringes to hospital in a cool pack to keep frozen
5. Store on **Ward 96** in the appropriate freezer.
6. If baby is unable to breastfeed at birth, give 2mls of colostrum every 3-4hrs over the next 24hrs.

Hand expressing should never hurt. If it hurts, perhaps your fingers are too close to the nipple. Avoid squeezing, pulling or sliding.

If you develop any abdominal pains while expressing, you should stop. Labour is not usually triggered by this process unless your uterus is very sensitive and ready for birthing.

Which milk to use?

Straight from mother is always best, followed by fresh and lastly previously frozen colostrum.

Storage of Expressed Breast Milk (EBM)

Make sure the EBM is clearly dated/timed so the oldest is used first.

Freezing: Over the course of 2 days, you can keep adding to the current container in your zip-lock bag, give the fresh milk time to cool before adding and if not being used at that time it must be put in the freezer.

Note: Adding expressed breast milk to frozen milk can cause the milk to thaw and then refreeze, which increases the risk of bacterial growth in the milk.

Ice packs: If you only need to store breast milk a short time, and don't have access to a fridge or freezer, you can use an insulated cooler bag with ice packs.

Don't use this method to store milk for more than 24 hours.

Transport of Expressed Breast Milk

- Ask your Lead Maternity Carer (LMC) to **advise the hospital** that you will be bringing in your EBM so they are aware that it will be available for use if needed.
- Use an **insulated cooler bag with ice packs** to transport the EBM and place it in the freezer on Ward 96 (staff will assist you with this).
- You can access the freezer at any time, even if you are on Tamaki Ward for your postnatal stay.