



# **Collecting My Colostrum While Pregnant**



## **What is colostrum?**

Colostrum is the early milk your body makes. It is a thick, sticky, yellowish liquid. It is very good for your baby for these reasons:

- It is easy for baby to digest.
- It is the perfect food for your baby.
- It is rich in fats and important nutrients, such as Vitamin A, protein, and minerals, which help your baby grow until your later milk comes in.
- It is full of antibodies, which help protect your baby from bacteria and viruses.

## **What does it mean to collect my milk while pregnant?**

This means you hand express\* your milk and keep it until your baby is ready for it. Some people can start collecting their milk at 36 weeks pregnant – ask your healthcare provider if this is the right time for you. For the best results, we suggest you hand express 2 to 3 times every day.

## **How much milk can I expect?**

Every person is different. There is no right or wrong amount. Some people get no milk and this is normal. Other people might get more. When you try to collect your milk while pregnant, you practise hand expressing and prepare your body to make milk for your baby.

If you get any milk, freeze it, and bring it when you come to the hospital to give birth. You can give it to your baby if needed.

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\*See [How do I hand express and collect my milk?](#) on page 5.

## **Why collect my milk while pregnant?**

Collecting your milk while pregnant can result in having extra food for baby if needed. Other benefits include:

- Telling the cells that make milk to start making your milk sooner.
- Preparing your body to make more milk sooner.
- Helping you feel more confident about breastfeeding or chestfeeding.
- Lowering the need to feed your baby with formula because of earlier and longer breastfeeding or chestfeeding.
- Learning to hand express before baby arrives, in the comfort of your home.

Human milk is the best food for babies. Your early milk has many benefits:

- It helps protect baby's gut and helps baby pass their first poop, called meconium. This poop is very dark and tarry.
- It helps protect baby from bacteria and viruses that cause infection because colostrum has antibodies.
- It helps prevent allergies and obesity, and lowers baby's risk of diabetes.
- It helps protect your baby from jaundice. This is a condition that can make baby too sleepy to feed and make their skin and eyes yellow. Jaundice can be mild or serious but your colostrum can help prevent it.

## **Is it safe to collect my milk while pregnant?**

Ask your healthcare provider if collecting your milk while pregnant is safe for you.

Some parents can start collecting their milk when they are 36 weeks pregnant. If you have painful contractions while hand expressing, stop.

Your doctor, nurse practitioner, or midwife can tell you if it is not safe to collect your milk while pregnant. Reasons can include:

- placenta completely covering the cervix (placenta previa)
- placenta less than 2 centimetres from the cervix (low-lying placenta)
- weak cervix (cervical incompetence)
- cervix shorter than usual
- treatment for a weak cervix called cervical cerclage
- your growing baby is smaller than expected (fetal growth restriction)
- chance of giving birth earlier than expected
- c-section planned
- c- section in the past

If you had a c-section in the past, it is best to try hand expressing and placing baby on your breast or chest in the first hour after birth.

## How can I prepare to collect my milk while pregnant?

Visit these websites to watch videos about collecting your milk while pregnant. Scan the QR code or select the link to learn about hand expression:



Carlington Public Health Prenatal Hand Expression  
Carlington Community Health Centre and  
Ontario's Community Health Centres  
[vimeo.com/422803967](https://vimeo.com/422803967)

Early Hand Expression Increases Later Milk Production  
Dr Jane Morton, Stanford Medicine

[tinyurl.com/drjmortonearlyhandexpression](https://tinyurl.com/drjmortonearlyhandexpression)

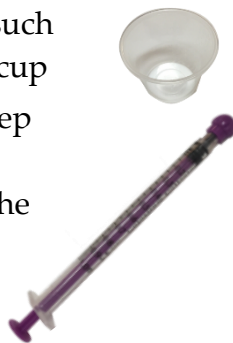


More Details About Hand Expression  
First Droplets  
[firstdroplets.com/abcs](https://firstdroplets.com/abcs)

## What supplies do I need?

You need very few supplies to collect and keep your milk:

- clean container to catch your milk such as a spoon, shot glass, or medicine cup
- containers that can be capped to keep your milk such as syringes  
Use the same syringe to collect all the milk you get in one day. Keep the syringe in the fridge when not hand expressing.
- re-sealable bag such as a Ziploc® bag
- stickers to write your name and date on



## How do I hand express and collect my milk?

1. Wash your hands.
2. Write your name and the date on a sticker. Place it on a syringe.

3. Put your hand in a C-shape on the tissue near the darker area around your nipple (areola).

Push your fingers and thumb toward your ribs. Gently squeeze your fingers together well behind your nipple and slide your fingers toward your nipple. Do not pinch your nipple.



4. Catch your milk in a clean container.
5. When the milk seems to stop, move your fingers to another area around your areola. Repeat the gentle expressing until milk seems to stop again. Continue moving and expressing until milk is removed from all areas of the breast or chest tissue.
6. Repeat steps 3 to 5 on the other side.
7. Place your milk from the clean container into a syringe and cap the syringe.

If you have painful contractions while hand expressing, stop.  
If contractions become regular, call your healthcare provider or the staff at your planned place of birth.

8. At the end of the day, place the capped syringe with milk in a re-sealable bag.

If there is no sticker on the bag, place a sticker with your name and the date. If the bag has a sticker with your name, add the date. Place the bag in the freezer.

9. Wash all other supplies with warm water and dish soap. Let them air dry.

## How do I get my milk from home to hospital?

How you get your milk from home to the hospital depends on the state of your milk before you transport. If you can, freeze your milk so it stays safe for baby.



State of Milk	Transport method	Transport Time
Fresh, room temperature	Sealed container	Less than 4 hours
Fresh, refrigerated	Insulated bag with gel ice packs	Less than 24 hours
Frozen	Insulated bag, tightly packed with or without gel ice packs	Less than 18 hours

**Reminder:** Place a sticker with your name and the date you expressed the milk on syringes and re-sealable bags.

## What do I do with my milk at the hospital?

To keep your milk safe, give it to your baby's nurse as soon as possible.

If your baby needs extra milk at the hospital:

- Warm your frozen early milk.
- Hand express after feedings for more extra milk.

## Did you know?

Learning to hand express before baby is born gives you time to practise hand expressing and prepares your cells to make milk.

Making any milk before baby is born is a bonus! If you get any milk, freeze it, and bring it when you come to the hospital to give birth. Ask someone to bring it if you forget. You can give it to your baby if needed.

## Where can I find more information?

Scan the QR code or select the link to find more information.



Expressing breast/human milk

Fraser Health

[tinyurl.com/FHexpressmilk](https://tinyurl.com/FHexpressmilk)

A Video on Hand Expressing Breastmilk

HealthLinkBC

[tinyurl.com/healthlinkbchandexpressvideo](https://tinyurl.com/healthlinkbchandexpressvideo)



Baby's First Breastmilk — Colostrum

HealthLinkBC

[tinyurl.com/healthlinkbccolostrum](https://tinyurl.com/healthlinkbccolostrum)

Collecting Colostrum Prenatally

More Milk Sooner

[moremilksooner.com/antenatal](https://moremilksooner.com/antenatal)



Antenatal Expression of Colostrum

La Leche League GB

[laleche.org.uk/antenatal-expression-of-colostrum](https://laleche.org.uk/antenatal-expression-of-colostrum)

Colostrum Collection in Pregnancy

Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust

[youtu.be/PnG4pW9z4Cc](https://youtu.be/PnG4pW9z4Cc)



Feeding Your Baby

Providence Health Care

[tinyurl.com/providencefeedbaby](https://tinyurl.com/providencefeedbaby)

[www.fraserhealth.ca](http://www.fraserhealth.ca)

This information does not replace the advice given to you by your healthcare provider.

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