



CHILDREN'S
HEART SURGERY
FUND



Expressing breast milk
when your baby is on
the **Cardiac Ward**



This booklet is intended to give you advice and support while you are establishing a milk supply for your baby/babies.

Why do we talk so much about breast milk?

When a baby is on the cardiac unit, breast milk has ingredients in it that can work like a medicine to protect them against infections. It also contains ingredients which help their gut to mature and prepare it to receive larger volumes of milk that they will need to thrive.

Breast milk can reduce the risk of your baby having long term problems including those of the eyes and lungs. It is also important for the development of the brain.

It may be that your baby has a particular cardiac condition which means they will not be able to have formula milk in their first few weeks of life, but can have breast milk.

Babies fall into this group for different reasons, but often it is because the oxygen supply to their tummy is being affected by their cardiac condition which can put them at an increased risk of developing an infection in the tummy called NEC (Necrotising Enterocolitis). This infection can vary from being mild to severe, but giving mother's breast milk is known to help prevent a baby from developing it.

Even if you do not plan to breastfeed long term, we would ask you to consider expressing breast milk for your baby while they are in hospital, in order to give them the best opportunity to progress.

There is support and advice available in the hospital from our team of breast feeding champions as well as the hospital infant feeding team.

We understand it is not possible for every mother, and that is okay as we can work out a plan that is suitable to every mother and baby.





How do I express breast milk?

- A member of staff will show you how to hand express your breast milk within a couple of hours of giving birth.
- Hand expressing works best to stimulate your breast milk hormones so that you can have a better milk supply.

When do I need to express?

- In the first 2 weeks, or until your baby starts to breastfeed, you will need to express at least 8-12 times over a 24 hour period.
- You can cluster express, which means expressing frequently with short gaps between each session when it is convenient, and have longer gaps at other times when you're busy.
- Try not to have more than a six hour gap between expressions.
- At around 2-3 days after having your baby, the volumes you produce will be increasing, and it may be the right time to start using an electric pump if you have been hand expressing.
- If you set up a good supply in the first few weeks you can then be a bit more flexible about when and how much express. By then it should not affect your supply if you give yourself a break on the odd day, and do less than eight sessions.

How do I hand express?

1. Have a small syringe or clean sterilised container to hand before you start.
2. Cup your breast and position your fingers in a 'C' shape, placing your thumb and finger about 3cm from the base of the nipple.
3. Gently squeeze this area and then release.
4. Repeat this to build up a rhythm. Avoid sliding your fingers over the skin. The amount of milk you get will be small at first, sometimes just a few drops glistening at the nipple, but keep going as with practice and time it will help build up your supply.
5. When the flow slows down, move your fingers round the breast to try to section off your breast and repeat. When the flow slows again swap to the other breast. Keep changing breasts until the milk is dripping very slowly or stops altogether.
6. If the milk doesn't flow, try moving your fingers slightly towards the nipple or further away, and use gentle breast massage.



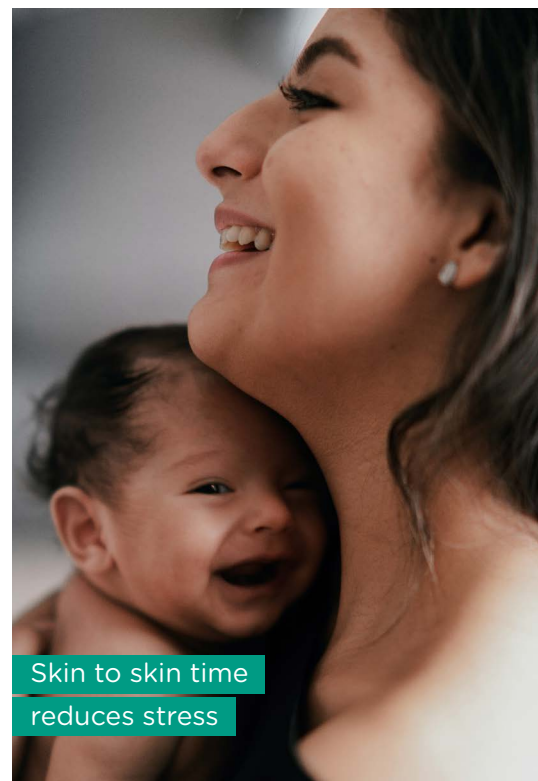
What helps?

Oxytocin is a hormone that you and your baby make when you feel relaxed, secure and loved.

Babies benefit from high levels of oxytocin as it helps their brain to grow and for them to develop into a happy baby. Oxytocin is also really important in reducing stress hormones and encouraging your milk to flow well.

To increase oxytocin levels

- Take some time to prepare for expressing – breast massage and nipple rolling beforehand will help the milk to flow more easily. If you are using the pump, still hand express before you start.
- Try using relaxation techniques as stress and tension can make pumping less productive.
- Engage as many senses as possible. If you are in hospital, express at your baby's bedside. Look at a picture of your baby, inhale your baby's scent from a recently worn piece of clothing or a bonding square.
- Spend as much time as you can with your baby, skin to skin. This helps you to get to know each other, reduces stress levels in both of you and helps stabilise your baby.



Skin to skin time
reduces stress



'Double pumping' can
increase milk supply

It is also really important that you know how to use the breast pump and pump effectively.

- Someone should show you how to work the pump properly and ensure it is set up correctly.
- If you feel any pain or discomfort when expressing it might be that you need a different shield size.
- Try pumping both your breasts at the same time. 'Double pumping' can increase the amount of milk you produce and it takes less time.

There are a number of useful film clips for expressing, breastfeeding and relationship building.

Baby Friendly Initiative
www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly

Best Beginnings
www.bestbeginnings.org.uk

DAILY RECORD

This is for you to record how many times you express your breast milk and the volume you obtain. Remember even if your baby is taking tiny amounts of your breast milk now, they will need more as they get bigger.

Research has shown that the more milk you are producing two weeks after your baby is born, the better your long term supply will be. This is why we encourage you to express so frequently in the first 2 weeks. It is normal for the amounts you express to vary over the day - it is the total volume over 24 hours that is important.

Day 1



Colostrum comes in very small amounts and every drop is precious as it contains lots of important ingredients. That's why hand expressing is so important, so nothing is wasted.

No. of expressions	Start time	End time	Total mls produced
1	:	:	ml
2	:	:	ml
3	:	:	ml
4	:	:	ml
5	:	:	ml
6	:	:	ml
7	:	:	ml
8	:	:	ml
9	:	:	ml
10	:	:	ml
11	:	:	ml
12	:	:	ml

Day 2



Keep snacks close by - it will stop you missing meals and provide you with energy. Expressing and breastfeeding mothers can get free meals while you are on the ward. A member of staff will be able to tell you how to get these.

No. of expressions	Start time	End time	Total mls produced
1	:	:	ml
2	:	:	ml
3	:	:	ml
4	:	:	ml
5	:	:	ml
6	:	:	ml
7	:	:	ml
8	:	:	ml
9	:	:	ml
10	:	:	ml
11	:	:	ml
12	:	:	ml

Day 3



Don't forget that it is really important to express at least once in the night. Try having a glass of water before you go to bed and express when you get up to go to the toilet.

No. of expressions	Start time	End time	Total mls produced
1	:	:	ml
2	:	:	ml
3	:	:	ml
4	:	:	ml
5	:	:	ml
6	:	:	ml
7	:	:	ml
8	:	:	ml
9	:	:	ml
10	:	:	ml
11	:	:	ml
12	:	:	ml

Day 4



By expressing your breast milk, your body gets a signal to produce more. Trust this process, your body is very clever.

No. of expressions	Start time	End time	Total mls produced
1	:	:	ml
2	:	:	ml
3	:	:	ml
4	:	:	ml
5	:	:	ml
6	:	:	ml
7	:	:	ml
8	:	:	ml
9	:	:	ml
10	:	:	ml
11	:	:	ml
12	:	:	ml

Day 5



Everyone has good and bad days. Some days will be better than others. Be reassured that your baby is being cared for 24 hours a day. No question is a silly question. The staff will be happy to answer any questions you have.

No. of expressions	Start time	End time	Total mls produced
1	:	:	ml
2	:	:	ml
3	:	:	ml
4	:	:	ml
5	:	:	ml
6	:	:	ml
7	:	:	ml
8	:	:	ml
9	:	:	ml
10	:	:	ml
11	:	:	ml
12	:	:	ml

Day 6



Expressing for a baby on the ward can feel relentless. Once you have established a good supply after the first 14 days, you can often reduce frequency of expressing a little without affecting your supply.

No. of expressions	Start time	End time	Total mls produced
1	:	:	ml
2	:	:	ml
3	:	:	ml
4	:	:	ml
5	:	:	ml
6	:	:	ml
7	:	:	ml
8	:	:	ml
9	:	:	ml
10	:	:	ml
11	:	:	ml
12	:	:	ml

Day 7



You are doing a wonderful job and should be proud of yourself. Everyone's journey is different. Keep going.

No. of expressions	Start time	End time	Total mls produced
1	:	:	ml
2	:	:	ml
3	:	:	ml
4	:	:	ml
5	:	:	ml
6	:	:	ml
7	:	:	ml
8	:	:	ml
9	:	:	ml
10	:	:	ml
11	:	:	ml
12	:	:	ml

Using breast pumps at home

If your baby remains in hospital and you are going home, it is important that you continue to express your breast milk.

If you are expressing frequently, you may find it easier to express using an electric pump.

Some local areas allow you to borrow an electric breast pump, otherwise manufacturers will often lend electric pumps to you, at a charge. More information about expressing breast milk and breast pumps can be found from the websites or telephone numbers listed on page 9.

Staff will also be happy to give more information or support - please ask.



Useful contact details

NCT Breastfeeding helpline

0300 330 0771

www.nct.org.uk

La Leche League

0845 120 2918

www.laleche.org.uk

Association of Breastfeeding Mothers

0844 412 2949

www.abm.me.uk

Breastfeeding Network

0300 100 0210

www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk

National Breastfeeding Helpline

0300 100 0212

www.breastfeeding.nhs.uk

BLISS for Preterm Babies

0500 618 140

www.bliss.org

Best Beginnings

www.bestbeginnings.org.uk

TAMBA Twins and Multiple Births Association

www.tamba.org.uk

Haamla Service

0113 206 5477

Infant Feeding Team

0113 206 5367



Information taken from 'Expressing breast milk when your baby is on the neonatal unit'

© The Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust • 1st edition (Ver 1)
Developed by: The Paediatric Dietitians

Publication date: 09/2021
Review date: 09/2023

The Breastfeeding Project is
generously supported by



Supporting hearts for life.

chsf.org.uk