



London Health Sciences Centre

Patient Information

HAND EXPRESSION

Hand expression is an important skill to learn when breastfeeding or pumping.

Reasons to Hand Express

- A drop of colostrum/breastmilk can be applied to your nipples to keep them moist and lessen the risk of infection.
- An expressed drop of colostrum/breastmilk on your nipple can soften and encourage your baby to latch and feed.
- Expressing breastmilk can relieve breast discomfort and help soften your breast.
- Colostrum is thick and it can be more easily removed by hand expression than by pumping.
- Expressing colostrum/breastmilk can help establish and build your milk supply.
- Expressed colostrum/breastmilk can be fed to your baby.

Tips to Help Your Milk Flow

- Find a comfortable place to express.
- Use different actions that you know will help you relax (ie. music, meditation, massage, etc).
- Relax and think about your baby.
- Look at your baby or a picture/video of your baby.
- Try a warm shower or place a warm cloth on your breasts before you begin.
- Gently massaging the breasts.
- Learn where to place your fingers on the breast. Try different positions until you find what works best for you.
- Drops of milk may not appear right away. Continue practicing and ask for help if needed.

The Collection Container

- Talk to your health care provider about the best type of collection container to use and how to clean the collection container.
- If you are expressing colostrum expect to collect a few drops to a teaspoon at first. A small collection container such as a spoon or syringe is fine to use.
- If you are expressing breastmilk you will need a larger collection container. Choose one with a wide opening. Be sure it is clean before you begin.

Hand expression is a learned skill. You get better by practicing.

How to Hand Express



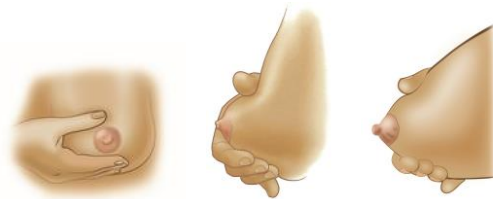
- Wash your hands with warm water and soap before expressing your Colostrum/breastmilk.



- Gently massage each breast before hand expressing.
- Stroke down towards the nipple.



- Place your thumb near the dark skin (aerola) and cup the rest of your hand under your breast.
- Press your hand back towards your chest, while at the same time gently squeezing your thumb and first finger together. This should not hurt. Remember: Press, Compress, Release.



Press (back towards your chest) Compress relax

“Adapted with permission from Health Nexus”

If you have concerns about hand expression or the amount of colostrum/breastmilk that you are getting, please contact your health care provider or someone skilled in helping with breastfeeding right way.

- Express your milk until no more comes out. Then rotate your fingers to another place outside the darker area (aerola) and repeat.
- Switch from breast to breast until the milk flow stops completely. The amount of colostrum/breastmilk that you express can vary every time you express.

Videos on Colostrum collection:

<https://globalhealthmedia.org/videos/expressing-the-first-milk/>

[A Video on Hand Expressing Breastmilk | HealthLink BC](#)

https://youtu.be/3fePtAUueko?si=inXYnoj_wRxj4Klb

Videos on breastmilk collection:

[A Video on Hand Expressing Breastmilk | HealthLink BC](#)

<https://globalhealthmedia.org/portfolio-items/how-to-express-breastmilk/>

<https://med.stanford.edu/newborns/professional-education/breastfeeding/hand-expressing-milk.html>

Adapted from South LA Health Projects WIC Program/LA Bio Med with permission 2012. Currently revised by the Breastfeeding Coalition of Southwestern Ontario (BSCO) with representation from London Health Sciences Centre, Middlesex London Health Unit, Strathroy Middlesex General Hospital, Southwestern Public Health, Chatham-Kent Health Alliance, and Woodstock General Hospital. Most recently revised March 2024.