

HOW CAN I BRING MY COLOSTRUM TO THE HOSPITAL?

When you attend the hospital for the birth of your baby, bring your syringes of frozen colostrum labelled in an **insulated bag/box with ice blocks** to ensure they remain frozen.

On arrival to the delivery or antenatal ward, **let your midwife know** that you have frozen colostrum so that we can store your colostrum in our colostrum freezer located on Fitzwilliam Wing.

We advise that you bring a **maximum of 10 syringes** to minimise wastage.

HOW DO I USE MY COLOSTRUM?

After giving birth, you will be admitted to the postnatal ward. If you are advised that your harvested colostrum is needed or you would like to give it your baby, please ask a staff member to retrieve it from the colostrum freezer. A midwife will guide you in how to safely administer the colostrum to minimise the risk of aspiration for your baby.

Use thawed colostrum within 24 hours. If thawed colostrum is not used within 24 hours your colostrum will not be safe for consumption.

Sometimes, all of the colostrum you have brought into the hospital may be needed in one feed, especially if your baby has low blood sugar. Your midwife will guide you if this is needed.

If breastfeeding goes well, you can still use your harvested colostrum if you wish.



We ask that you take home any unused colostrum. **Any frozen colostrum left behind in the hospital freezer will be discarded after one week.**



FURTHER INFORMATION & RESOURCES

There is a **weekly Antenatal Colostrum Harvesting Information session** in The National Maternity Hospital. Details on this are on our website www.nmh.ie under 'classes'.

Online HSE resource www.mychild.ie has lots of useful information on pregnancy, birth and parenthood, including breastfeeding.

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V1 - March 2025



The National Maternity Hospital



ANTENATAL COLOSTRUM HARVESTING

Congratulations on starting your breastfeeding journey. Antenatal colostrum harvesting is the hand expressing and collection of colostrum **from 37 weeks of pregnancy**.

Consult with your midwife or obstetrician before starting antenatal colostrum harvesting, particularly if you have certain pregnancy risk factors.

This leaflet gives you information on how to safely collect colostrum and its benefits for your baby.

WHAT IS COLOSTRUM?

- Colostrum is a sticky yellowish fluid which is produced by your breasts from 16 weeks of pregnancy and in the first few days after birth.
- It provides perfect nutrition specifically for your newborn baby.
- Colostrum is low in volume but high in energy and helps with the early passage of meconium (baby's first bowel motion).

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF ANTENATAL COLOSTRUM HARVESTING?

Expressing colostrum is recommended for all low-risk mothers and women with diabetes who hope to breastfeed. It prepares you for breastfeeding by familiarising you with the process of milk expression and identifying a comfortable latch when your baby is breastfeeding.

Your harvested colostrum is available if needed after your baby's birth. Your harvested colostrum might be needed for several reasons.

These could include:

- your baby not latching effectively
- if you are not able or you do not feel able to breastfeed
- your baby has low-blood sugar

Your midwife will advise you if your colostrum is needed.

WHEN CAN I START?

You can start colostrum harvesting **from 37 weeks of pregnancy** following consultation with your midwife or obstetrician.

HOW DO I COLLECT THE COLOSTRUM?

The National Maternity Hospital supplies free Colostrum harvesting packs. You can **request them at your antenatal visits**.



Please scan the QR code for a video explaining how to harvest your colostrum



Remember:

Never use a breast pump during pregnancy

HOW OFTEN SHOULD I HARVEST COLOSTRUM?

Initially, express just once or twice a day for 10 minutes. Aim to gradually increase to 3 times a day: in the morning, at lunch time, and in the evening for approximately 10 minutes on each breast to develop your technique.

HOW MUCH SHOULD I EXPECT?

Initially, you may collect varying amounts, from a few drops to a teaspoon.

It is also normal for colostrum to not appear. Some women may only release colostrum after their baby is born. However, the hand expressing technique itself is valuable practice.

WHAT DO I DO IF I BEGIN TO EXPERIENCE CONTRACTIONS?

If you experience contractions, you can stop and try again later.

HOW DO I STORE MY COLOSTRUM?

You can store your syringe of colostrum in the back of the **fridge** adding to it at every collection across one day.

Once you have **finished hand expressing for the day** or **have filled a syringe**, label* the syringe correctly with your name, date of birth, hospital number and date of collection, then **place in the freezer**. (*Blank labels are included in your Colostrum Harvesting Pack.)