




CONTACT INFORMATION

If you are having difficulty expressing your colostrum or if you need breastfeeding advice, please contact a breastfeeding support mom that is part of the *C'MAMAN* program.

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**Centre intégré
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sociaux de l'Abitibi-
Témiscamingue**

Québec 

ANTENATAL EXPRESSION OF COLOSTRUM



INFORMATION FOR PREGNANT WOMEN

Québec 

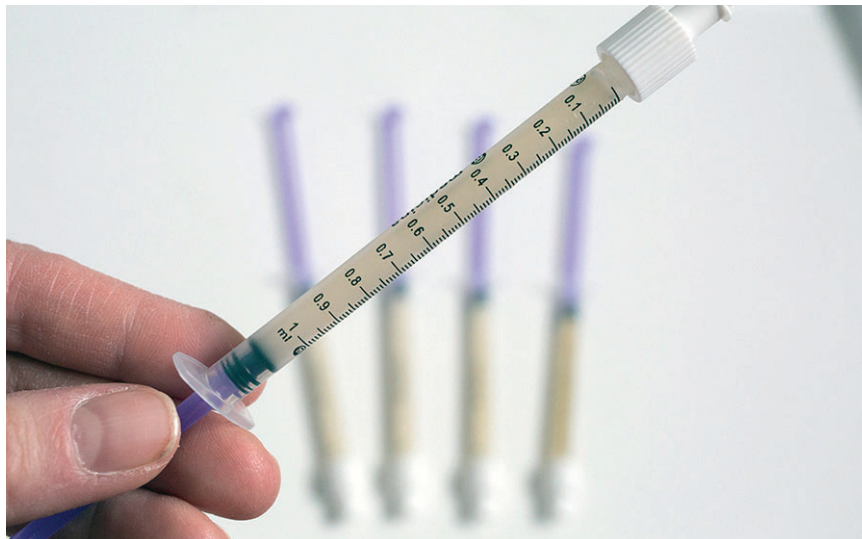
What is it?

Colostrum is a milky fluid secreted by the breasts in small quantities before delivery and during the first few days after the baby's birth.

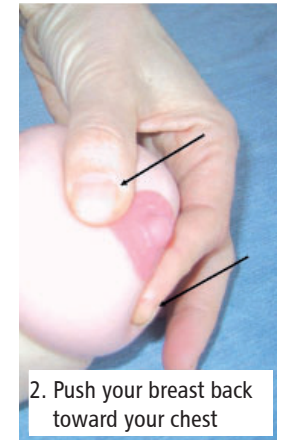
It is rich in nutrients and contains antibodies that help protect the newborn against infections and help develop friendly bacteria in the infant's gut.

When expressing colostrum it is normal to obtain small quantities, especially at first; colostrum is referred to as "liquid gold" for newborns. It has such powerful benefits that even small quantities are considered precious.

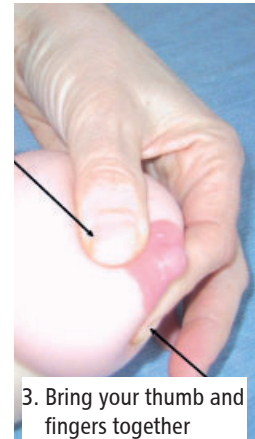
What is colostrum?



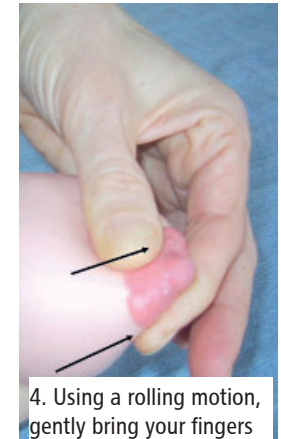
1. Starting position



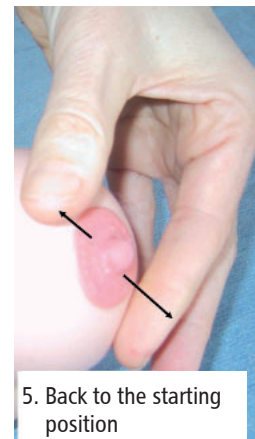
2. Push your breast back toward your chest



3. Bring your thumb and fingers together



4. Using a rolling motion, gently bring your fingers and thumb forward



5. Back to the starting position



6. Repeat the motion in different parts around the areola.

Photos : Ingrid Bayot

Storing colostrum

Collect your colostrum with a spoon or small syringe.

Make sure the syringes are capped before refrigerating.

Within 24 hours of expressing, the syringes must be placed in the freezer until birth in a resealable bag labelled with the mother's name.

If you like, you may collect all the colostrum expressed over a 24-hour period into one 3 ml syringe before freezing.

At the time of birth, bring your plastic bag of syringes filled with colostrum. You can use an ice pack to keep them frozen during transport.

When you arrive at the department of obstetrics (maternity ward), give your bag to the nurse so that it can be put in the freezer.

Your colostrum syringes can be thawed at room temperature or under warm running water. Thawed syringes must be used within 24 hours.

Hand expression is a technique that all mothers should know. It is the most effective way of expressing colostrum.

It is free and, later, will also allow you to relieve your engorged breasts anywhere and anytime.

Why express your colostrum?

It has been shown that mothers who have expressed colostrum antenatally have a higher production at the time of delivery and that their milk comes in earlier. These women are more comfortable manipulating their breasts when nursing and they are more prepared to start the technique for expressing breast milk manually.

The colostrum reserves given to the newborn baby will help prevent jaundice. In addition, these reserves could come in handy, as they could avoid giving cow's milk formula to the infant in certain situations that can occur in the first days of the newborn's life.

You can thus stock up on colostrum before your baby is born. You may start at 38 weeks of pregnancy, subject to your physician's approval.

Recommendations

The expression of colostrum, just like sexual intercourse, can increase the oxytocin hormone in your blood and cause the uterus to contract (cramps), which is normal.

However, the antenatal expression of colostrum is not recommended for high risk pregnancies. It is best to check first with your physician to make sure it is safe for you and the baby.

List of materials needed

You will need the following materials:

- Small plastic syringes (1 ml) with caps (ask for some at the pharmacy);
- 3 ml plastic syringes with caps (if you want to collect the colostrum expressed over a 24-hour period into a single syringe);
- Clean spoon or small container (washed with soap and water);
- Resealable plastic bag to store syringes;
- Self-adhesive labels to identify the bag and syringes.

The use of a breast pump is not recommended for expressing colostrum, as the small amounts expressed may be retained in the tubing and thus be difficult to collect.

Step-by-step expression technique

This technique is easier to do than to explain. You can ask the hospital staff, your midwife, the nurse of the local community centre (CLSC) or the breastfeeding support mom (C'MAMAN) to teach you the technique. *(See contact information on last page).*

You can express your colostrum 2 to 3 times a day.

Express your colostrum for approximately 5 minutes per breast.

1. Wash your hands with soap and water.
2. Use a clean syringe.
3. Label the syringe with the date and time at which you started expressing the colostrum.
4. Gently massage your breasts to help get the colostrum flowing.

Step-by-step expression technique (cont.)

5. Form a "C" with your thumb and index finger (see photo 1).
6. Place your thumb and index finger on each side, on the edge of the areola, 2 to 5 cm (1 to 2 in) away from your nipple. With practice, you will find the distance that works for you (see photos 1 and 2).
7. Using your thumb and index, push your breast back toward your chest (see photo 2).
8. Maintain a firm pressure and bring your thumb and fingers together as if they are a pair of pliers. There is no need to press hard. This motion should not leave a mark on your breast nor cause any pain (see photo 3).
9. Use a gentle rolling motion to move your fingers forward (see photo 4).
10. Release the pressure and start over without removing your hand from your breast.
11. Repeat the movement several times, mimicking the baby's rhythmic action when nursing.
12. Be careful not to slide your fingers over your skin. Maintain a firm pressure on your breast without stretching the nipple, which is painful and not very effective.
13. Continue to express the colostrum using the same technique putting your fingers in different places around the areola until the flow stops (see photo 6).

It may take some time to get the colostrum flowing; and when it does, it will come out drop by drop.

The amount of colostrum expressed varies from woman to woman and will increase over time. Collect your colostrum in a small container or directly with the syringe.

You can also watch the following videos:

Dr. Sabrina Paradis, "L'extraction prénatale du colostrum" at:

www.cisss-at.gouv.qc.ca/allaitement/ (*bottom of the page*)

Global health media, « Exprimer et conserver le lait maternel » *on YouTube*