



Temple Street

CHILDREN'S UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL

Information for Parents on Expressing Breast Milk



What Are the Benefits of Breast Milk For My Baby ?

Breast milk has many benefits for your baby including helping to lower the risk of;

- ★ Allergies
- ★ Kidney and bladder infections
- ★ Chest infections
- ★ Gastrointestinal (gut) infections
- ★ Ear infections



It also helps your baby's mental development. Breast feeding will also help to protect you against;

- ★ Breast cancer
- ★ Cancer of the ovaries
- ★ Osteoporosis (thin bones) when you are older

It also helps you to lose the weight you put on during your pregnancy.

Why Do I Need to Express My Breast Milk ?

If your baby is unable to, or is not ready to feed from your breast due to illness it is important that you express milk as soon as possible after the birth. This will ensure that you will have enough breast milk for your baby when he / she begins to feed.

How Often Should I Express ?

Expressing milk regularly is important to ensure that you maintain a good supply of milk. It is recommended that you express milk every 2-3 hours, or 6-8 times within a 24 hour period.

To avoid a long gap between expressing it is advised that you begin expressing when you get up in the morning and ensure that you express before going to bed at night. Ideally you should express at least once overnight as it is important not to go for longer than 6 or 7 hours without expressing.

It is not uncommon to have uncomfortably full breasts in the morning, particularly in the few weeks after your baby is born. Occasionally women may experience:

Engorgement (extra fullness). This fullness and tenderness is caused by extra blood supply to your breasts. Your breasts may feel hot, tender and very full.

Mastitis, which is an inflammation of the breast. It may or may not be caused by infection. Watch out for signs of mastitis which may include painful breasts, a hot, red, firm swelling on your breasts, fever and flu like symptoms.

Expressing milk regularly helps to prevent breast conditions such as engorgement and mastitis. If you do experience any of the above or other symptoms it is important to inform the nurse caring for your baby, your GP or public health nurse who will advise you about appropriate treatment.

How Long Should I Express For Each Time?

The length of time will differ between mothers. It is important to slowly build up the time you spend expressing. As a guideline aim for 20- 30 minutes for each breast. However, you should express until the flow of milk stops.

When you are comfortable using the pump and your milk supply is established you may prefer to use a "double pumping" system. Ask your baby's nurse for more information.



How Much Milk Should I Produce ?

You may feel stressed or tired due to your baby's illness. This may cause you to produce less milk on certain days. This is normal.

The amount of milk you produce will change throughout the day. You may find that you produce more in the morning and less as the day goes on.

What Can I Do To Help My Milk Supply ?

When you are using a breast pump instead of breast feeding, your body produces less of the hormone called prolactin. Prolactin controls how your body produces breast milk.

There are a few things you can do to help your supply of breast milk.

- ★ Try expressing breast milk when you are beside your baby in the ward or unit. If this is not possible express in a relaxing atmosphere with music playing and a photo of your baby beside you. Have some of your baby's clothes near by. This will help your body produce more prolactin (hormone).
- ★ Have a warm bath or shower before expressing, or place a warm face cloth on your breasts.
- ★ Massaging your breasts before expressing for 3-5 minutes will help increase your milk supply by improving the blood supply.
- ★ Gentle shoulder and neck massage will encourage your milk to flow (let down).
- ★ Drink fluids as normal throughout the day to prevent you becoming thirsty (non alcoholic).
- ★ Eat regularly. You are entitled to a subsidised meal voucher from the hospital for your main meals. The nurse looking after your baby will give you the voucher.

★ When possible, rest as much as you can. Ask a friend or relative to stay with your baby while you rest.

Always check with the nursing staff about the visiting policy in the Ward, Intensive Care Unit (ICU) and Neonatal High Dependency Unit (NHDU).

If you would like a room in parent's accommodation during your child's stay, please ask the nurse caring for your child, who will try to organise this.



Can I Express Milk if I Need To Take Medication ?

Many mothers give up breast-feeding and/or expressing to take medication; however, this is rarely necessary. Medication taken by a mother can be found in her breast milk. However the amount found is usually small, less than 1%. Talk to your nurse or GP before taking any medication.

The ward / unit staff can check a reference book about your particular type of medication and advise you.

How Can I Help My Partner Feel Included ?

There are many things your partner can do to help which will make them feel included in your baby's care. They can change your baby's nappy, clothes etc.

They can help get the equipment for expressing your breast milk organised.

They can take their turn minding /caring for or playing with your baby while you rest or eat. This will allow them time to bond with your baby.

Breast Pump



How Do I Care For The Equipment I Use For Expressing ?

PUMP

While your baby is in hospital you may use the hospital breast pump if you wish. Staff will show you how to use the pump. Always start the pump at the lowest setting, slowly increasing the suction to a setting that suits you.

COLLECTION SET

A member of staff will issue you with a collection set for expressing milk (see picture below).

It must be taken apart and washed using warm soapy water after each use and rinsed well.

The set must then be sterilised using a steam steriliser which is available in the ward kitchen.



When the set is sterilised it must be put together, this will make sure the inside remains sterile. Clear plastic bags are available to then store the giving set.

The collection set is your responsibility. When it is sterilised keep it safe by your baby's cot between feeds.

The tube which connects the collection set to the pump does not need to be sterilised between feeds. Store it safely.

Are There Any Precautions I Need To Take When Handling Expressed Breast Milk (EBM) ?

- **Always** wash your hands before expressing and handling EBM.
- **Always** use a sterile container with a lid.
- Do not fill the container to the top. Leave approximately 2.5cms to allow the milk to expand as it freezes.
- Please ask a staff member for disposable Axifeed feeding bottles.
- Avoid touching the inside of the container or lid to prevent the risk of infection.
- **Write the date and time on the sticker.** Any container without a date and time will be thrown out.
- Use freshly expressed breast milk before frozen expressed milk.

How Do I Label My Container ?

Each bottle must be labelled with the following

Your baby's name.

His or her date of birth.

Healthcare record number.

Date and time your milk was expressed.

Please ask staff for bottles and labels.

Expressed milk must be clearly labelled.

Incorrectly labelled bottles will be thrown out to protect all the babies on the ward / unit.

If your baby is transferred from another hospital together with expressed breast milk, the original label can remain and a Children's University Hospital label will also be added.

How Do I Store The EBM ?

If you are using the freezer / icebox section of your fridge at home it should be moved to a freezer as soon as possible or use within 2 weeks.

FROZEN EBM

Type EBM	Expected Temperature Range	Time Before EBM Expires
Freezer	-18°C or less	3 Months
Fridge Ice Box	-4°C or less	2 Weeks

DEFROSTED EBM

Type EBM	Expected Temperature Range	Time Before EBM Expires
In fridge	0-5°C	24 Hours
Used in Pump	Room Temperature	4 Hours
Defrosted with warm water	Use immediately	Do not store

FRESH EBM

Type EBM	Expected Temperature Range	Time Before EBM Expires
Fresh EBM	Fridge 0-5°C	48 Hours
Fresh EBM from fridge	Room Temperature	4 Hours
Heated with warm water	Use immediately	Do not store

If EBM is heated it must be used immediately, do not return to fridge, do not put in feeding pump.

How Do I Defrost EBM ?

The container should be thawed under cool running water, slowly increasing the temperature.

You can also place the container in warm water until fully defrosted.

If EBM is warmed to defrost, it must be used immediately.

Never use a microwave to heat EBM.

Do not defrost large volumes as wastage may occur.

Gently turn EBM upside down to mix it, **DO NOT** shake.

When removing EBM from the fridge / freezer please make sure the door is closed after you. Please tell the nurse you have taken a bottle.

When removing EBM from the freezer, wipe the lid of the container and **apply a daily sticker** (colour coded for each day of the week). Please ask a member of staff where the stickers are kept.

Write the date and time on the sticker, any container without a date and time will be thrown out.

What is The Best Way To Transport EBM ?

When you are bringing fresh EBM in to the hospital it should be placed in an insulated container with coolant blocks to keep the temperature 5°C or less.

Fresh EBM should be transported in an insulated container as soon as possible after expressing. If there is a delay, fresh EBM should be stored in the fridge at 5°C .

When you are bringing in frozen EBM from home it should be first frozen in a 3 star freezer. During the trip to hospital coolant blocks should be used in an insulated container to keep the temperature at -18°C .

Avoid mixing fresh and frozen EBM when possible. When you arrive at the hospital the temperature of the EBM will be checked to protect your baby.

- ★ If frozen EBM is less than -18°C it will be placed in the fridge to be used within 24 hours. It will **NOT** be placed in a freezer.
- ★ If the EBM is above 5°C it will be placed in the fridge for use within 4 hours.
- ★ If breast milk is expressed within 2 hours before arriving to hospital it can be frozen or put in the fridge as soon as you arrive.

What Happens When My Child is Going Home ?

Please remember to take your frozen EBM with you when you are taking your baby home as otherwise it will be discarded after one month.

If you wish to continue to express milk at home a pump can be rented. Ask staff for information before you leave.

Are There Any Support Services in The Community ?

There are many services to support breast feeding within the community, these include;

- ★ Your GP
- ★ Your Public Health Nurse
- ★ Local Breast Feeding Support Groups
- ★ Cuidiu
- ★ Local Lactation Consultant

The World Health Organisation (WHO) recommends that infants should be exclusively breast fed for the first 6 months of life to achieve best growth, development and health. After this time, infants should receive complimentary foods (plate feeds etc) while breast-feeding continues up to 2 years of age or beyond. (WHO /UNICEF 2003)

Useful Websites

www.hse.ie

www.healthpromotion.ie / breastfeeding

www.cuidiu-ict.ie

www.lalecheleague.org

www.medicare.ie

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the management and staff of St Michael's B Ward for their valuable contribution.

Please remember to wash your hands
or use hand gel when visiting the Hospital

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Version: 1

Approval Date: July 2013

Review Date: July 2015

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The information contained in this leaflet is correct at time of print