



Government of **Western Australia**
North Metropolitan Health Service
Women and Newborn Health Service

Expressing Breast Milk for your Baby in the NICU



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If your baby is unable to breastfeed you will need to begin expressing your breast milk as soon as possible. A free TV channel in your room has advice on expressing for your baby in the NCCU. Please check times with the ward staff.

How often and how long do I need to express?

In the beginning it is important to express your breasts seven to eight times a day, including at least once during the night. A newborn baby usually feeds every two to three hours. This is the ideal pattern, both for the baby's digestive system and for increasing your milk supply. Women who express regularly (including over night) for the first couple of weeks have fewer problems with their milk supply.

The midwife caring for you will guide you on how to start expressing. At first your breasts will need about 10 to 15 minutes of expressing each side to help start milk production.

When your milk supply increases (comes in) you may notice it takes longer to drain your breasts. You will know your breasts are drained when they feel soft, with no lumps, and the milk flow has slowed to a drip. How long you need to express depends on how much milk you produce and how quickly your let down reflex works (the let-down reflex releases the milk from the breast).

Suggested expressing times:

- 6.00am
- 9.00am to 10.00am
- 12noon
- 3.00pm to 4.00pm
- 6.00pm to 7.00pm
- 9.00pm to 10.00pm
- 2.00am to 3.00am

How much milk will I expect to express?

The first milk your breasts produce is called colostrum. The amount of colostrum you can express each time can range from a few drops up to 30mL. Your milk supply should establish within the first few weeks. As you continue to express, the amount of milk will increase. Studies have shown that the amount of milk women can produce by two weeks is between 440mL and 1200mL in 24 hours. There is a diary at the back of this booklet where you can record how much milk you express each time.

Expressing equipment

If your baby is in the NICU at KEMH, you can collect an expressing kit storage container and electric breast pump from the milk room between 11.00 and 12.00 (any day of the week), before you go home. The milk room is inside the neonatal intensive care unit on the ground floor.

You can go to a talk in the nursery on expressing for your baby. This is held on Tuesdays and Fridays and you will need to book your place first. Please ask the ward or milk room staff to make the booking for you. Before you go home from the hospital we also recommend you watch the free TV channel in your room for advice on expressing milk.

If your baby is in 6B at PMH, please ask a midwife for information on where to buy an expressing kit and hire an electric breast pump.

Expressing in the nursery

There are electric breast pumps available to you in each nursery for use at your baby's cot or in the expressing room. Clean bottles for expressing are in the fridge in each nursery.

The **advantages of expressing beside your baby** are:

- An increase in your milk supply.
- Staying close to your baby for longer.
- After expressing wipe down the electric pump with the hospital's cleaning solution/surface wipes.

At KEMH

You will need to bring your storage container and expressing equipment with you.

At PMH

An expressing kit will be loaned to you for hospital use only. Storage bottles are in the silver refrigerator in the main corridor.

Expressing with your own kit

- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water before starting.
- Use a clean container or bottle each time.
- Label containers with an EBM sticker and your baby's sticker including the date and time of the expression. Please write on the sticker any medications you have taken in the last 24 hours.

Cleaning your own expressing kit

- Separate all the pieces, including the valve and membrane.
- Immediately rinse all the pieces that touch the milk with cold water first.
- Using the container provided at the designated sink, wash the equipment in hot, soapy water with the bottle brush.
- Rinse all the equipment thoroughly with clean hot water.
- Shake off excess water.
- Dry with a clean paper towel. At home you may air-dry.
- Store in the clean, dry container provided.

Sterilising your equipment

TWICE A DAY you can use microwave bags to sterilise your expressing equipment. These bags may be collected from each nursery at any time.

Microwaves are provided in the following locations:

- Parent Lounge
- Expressing Room - Special Care Nursery 2
- Satellite Nursery

To use the sterilising bags, clean your expressing equipment using the steps on page 4 and then follow these next steps:

- Place the separated and cleaned equipment in the microwave bag.
- Add 60mls of water (this can be measured using your bottle).
- Seal the bag and place it in a microwave for 3 minutes
- **CAUTION:** Remove the bag with care - do not lift the bag with hand covering the steam vent. Items will be hot therefore allow to cool slightly and shake off excess water.
- **TWICE A DAY** use the bags to sterilise equipment, preferably in the morning and afternoon.
- Each bag may be used 20 times.
- The tubing does not need to be sterilised, it just needs to be wiped clean.

Storing and transporting your expressed breast milk

At home cool freshly expressed breast milk for half an hour in the fridge before adding to your stored cold breast milk. Store your milk in the refrigerator if you are intending to come into the nursery every day.

When transporting your milk, bring it in a small cooler with a reusable ice block. Any expressed breast milk not used for your baby within 48 hours of expressing will need to be frozen. Please tell the nurses if you have brought in frozen milk so that it can be taken straight to the milk room freezer.

At KEMH place your milk:

- in the bottom of the refrigerator in your baby's nursery in the black tray provided OR
- in the milk room by 10.00am.

At PMH place your milk in the right side of the silver refrigerator located in the main corridor, at any time of the day.

Expressing problems you might experience

1. Sore nipples

- Stroking your breasts gently before expressing can help your milk to flow.
- Make sure the cup fits correctly – different sizes are available.
- Please ask your midwife on the ward, a lactation consultant or milk room nurse for advice.
- Use a gentle even pressure on your nipple and breast when expressing.
- Start with a low pressure on the electric pump and then increase or adjust to your comfort level.
- Apply a few drops of your expressed breast milk to your nipples and let them air dry after you finish expressing.
- If soreness continues talk to the nurse caring for your baby, the lactation consultant or a midwife.

2. Changes to your milk supply

The amount of milk you express may change from day to day and from one expressing session to another. It is normal for one breast to produce more milk than the other breast. Aim to keep your milk supply greater than 500mL every 24 hours. This is approximately the amount your baby will need when they come home.

What might increase your milk supply

- Expressing at least seven to eight times every day.
- If you feel comfortable expressing next to your baby's cot.
- Double expressing followed by single expressing each breast for a few minutes to make sure the breast is completely drained.
- Massaging your breasts by hand before and/or after expressing.
- Rest and relaxation, especially while you are expressing.
- Improvement in your baby's condition.
- Skin-to-skin contact with your baby.

- Beginning to breastfeed.
- A well balanced diet, not skipping meals.
- Drinking at least six to eight glasses of water a day.

What might reduce your milk supply

- Not expressing enough or skipping expressing times.
- Not draining your breasts each time.
- Tiredness, anxiety and stress.
- Your baby's condition worsens.
- Medications such as cold and flu tablets with antihistamines or the combined birth control pill.
- You are unwell.
- Cigarette smoking.
- Anaemia (low iron levels).

For information or help

Contact	Times available	Phone no.
Milk Room Nurse NICU	Daily	(08) 6458 1190
Lactation Consultant NICU	By appointment	(08) 6458 2222 page 3462
Midwife 6B PMH	Daily	(08) 9340 8222 page 8534
Breastfeeding Centre KEMH	Monday to Friday 8.00am to 4.30pm	(08) 6458 1844
Australian Breastfeeding Association	7 Day Helpline	1800 686 268 1800 mum 2 mum



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in alternative formats on request for
a person with a disability.

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