



Instructions for hand expressing and storage of colostrum (early breast milk) for the Diabetes & Antenatal Milk Expressing (DAME) trial

As part of the DAME trial you have been allocated to begin expressing colostrum (early breast milk) from 36 weeks of pregnancy. This information sheet will answer some questions you may have about expressing and storing your breast milk at home.

How often do I express and for how long?

- Express twice a day, e.g. once in the morning, once in the evening.
- Express for about 10 minutes in total per session, for about 5 minutes each breast.
- If there is little or no colostrum expressed – don't worry, it is normal for women to produce varying amounts of colostrum.
- After you have expressed each time, and once you have stored your expressed colostrum, record the date and time you expressed in the expressing diary we have given you. Include the amount of colostrum you obtained as well as how long you expressed and any other comments you want to add.

How do I collect and store the colostrum?

- You have been given syringes to collect the colostrum.
- You may find it easier to collect the colostrum onto a clean teaspoon. Wash the teaspoon first with hot soapy water, then draw the colostrum up from the teaspoon into the syringe for storage (or pour into one of the small pots if you have a larger amount).
- You can use one syringe to collect all your colostrum for 24 hours, but always use a new syringe or pot each day. If you need to use more than one syringe or pot per day then ensure **all** are labelled.
- Place the stopper on the end of the syringe before storing it in the refrigerator or freezing.
- Label the syringes with the labels we have given you. The labels include your name, your hospital number and your date of birth. You will need to **add** the date and time of the first colostrum expressed in to any syringe (so you will have a new label with your details on each 24 hours).
- Place each syringe/pot into the freezer within 24 hours of first using it to store the colostrum. In other words, you can store your expressed milk in the refrigerator for up to 24 hours, and keep adding to it during this time, but then it needs to be frozen.

How do I hand express?

Before you start, always wash your hands with warm water and soap. You may find expressing after a warm bath or shower helps with the flow of colostrum. Sometimes gentle massage of your breasts before expressing may help. The DAME research midwife will have shown you how to express, but the instructions are here as well.

- Place the pads of your thumb and forefinger opposite each other on the outer edge of your areola and then gently press them back in to your breast tissue and squeeze together rhythmically. This should not be painful.
- Move your fingers around the areola to express all the milk ducts (like moving around the face of a clock).
- Express until the flow stops (up to 5 minutes, but not more) then change to the other breast.
- If your hand tires, swap to the other hand or have a rest.
- Remember – do not worry if there is little or no colostrum.
- Contact the DAME midwife if you need any further expressing advice.

What should I look out for?

Hand expressing while you are pregnant may cause an increase of the hormone oxytocin in your blood. This may cause some tightenings (mild contractions) in your uterus. In accordance with your usual care as a pregnant woman with diabetes, you may be having monitoring of your baby's heart rate (CTG monitoring). After the first expressing session in hospital you can continue twice daily expressing at home. If you have any monitoring of your baby's heart rate we ask you to do one of your daily expressings during the monitoring so we can make sure everything is going well and write that in the expressing record book we have given you .

It is unlikely that expressing will cause any problems, however before you express at home it is important that:

- You are not experiencing any abdominal or labour pains; and
- Your baby is moving normally.

If you are not sure that your baby is moving normally, you should not express and you should contact the Emergency Department (which is the same as we tell all pregnant women).

If you notice any of the following things during or after expressing:

- A prolonged tightening (lasting more than 1 minute);
- Very frequent tightenings (more than 5 in 10 minutes);
- Any bleeding; or
- A reduction in the baby's movements;

You should stop expressing and contact Emergency Department for advice.

Do I monitor my blood sugar whilst expressing?

- Today we have checked your blood sugar level following the first time you expressed
- For the next two times you express (at home) please check your blood sugar level and record it in your expressing diary as well as where you usually record it (e.g. your blood glucose record) Do this after you have expressed and at the same time as you would normally check do a blood sugar check, for example, start expressing about half an hour before your blood sugar level is due. This will reduce the need for extra blood testing.
- Treat any abnormal blood sugar level reading as you would do normally. That is, contact the Diabetes Educator or Emergency Department if you are concerned.

What happens when I come in to hospital to have my baby?

- Bring your frozen colostrum in with you when you come in to hospital to have your baby.
- Please bring it in the esky we gave you, packed with a frozen cold pack (there was one with the esky we gave you).
- Give the esky to the midwife when you arrive at the hospital and tell her it contains your frozen colostrum.
- It will be stored in the freezer in Ward 4 East (in the milk room).

Contact numbers:

Emergency Department The Womens' Hospital
DAME Research Midwife/Coordinator
Diabetes Educator

03 8345 3636
03 8345 2932
03 8345 2153