



Government of **Western Australia**
Child and Adolescent Health Service



Expressing breast milk for your baby

in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit



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Why may I need to express?

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 Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). 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 overnight) 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 ten to 15 minutes of expressing on each side to help promote 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 (release of milk from the breast) works.

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 can 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 show that the amount of milk women can produce by two weeks is between 440mL and 1200mL in 24 hours. You can record how much milk you express each time in the diary at the back of this booklet.

Expressing equipment

If your baby is in the NICU at KEMH, you can collect an expressing kit, storage containers and electric breast pump from the Neonatal Nutrition room inside the NICU on the ground floor between 11:00am and 12:00noon (daily). Expressing bottles are in each nursery for you to use.

The NICU hosts information sessions on expressing. These are held on Tuesdays and Fridays - you will need to book your place first with the ward or Neonatal Nutrition room staff. Before you go home from hospital, we recommend you watch the free TV channel in your room for advice on expressing milk.

If your baby is in Ward 3B at PCH, an expressing kit will be loaned to you for hospital use only. Storage bottles are in the silver refrigerator in the main corridor. Please ask a midwife for information on where to obtain an expressing kit and electric breast pump for when you go home.

Expressing beside your baby

The electric breast pumps can be used at your baby's cot or in the expressing room. 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.

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

You can use microwave bags to sterilise your expressing equipment twice daily. These bags may be collected from each nursery at any time. Microwaves are provided in the following locations:

- Parent lounge at KEMH and PCH
- Expressing room Special Care Nursery 2
- Satellite Nursery

To use the sterilising bags, clean your expressing equipment using the steps provided on this page and then follow these next steps.

1. Place the separated and cleaned equipment in the microwave bag.
2. Add 60mls of water (this can be measured using your bottle).
3. Seal the bag and place it in the microwave for three minutes.
4. Caution: remove the bag with care – do not lift the bag with hands covering the steam vent. Items will be hot so allow to cool slightly and shake off excess water.
5. Twice a day use the bags to sterilise equipment, preferably in the morning and afternoon.
6. Each bag may be used up to 20 times.
7. The tubing and caps do 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 toward the back 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. Check your milk with the nurse caring for your baby, wipe the container with sanitising wipes and place a green sticker on it.

If not visiting daily your milk may need to be frozen. Please discuss freezing your milk with the neonatal nutrition nurse.

At KEMH

- Place in the bottom of the refrigerator in your baby's nursery in the black tray provided.
- If bringing your milk in frozen, please tell the nurses on arrival so it can be taken straight to the neonatal nutrition room freezer.

At PCH

- Place your milk on the right side of the refrigerator located in the main corridor, at any time of day.
- Place frozen milk in the small grey freezer in the main corridor.

Expressing problems that you may experience

Sore nipples

- Stroking your breasts gently 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 Neonatal Nutrition 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.
- After expressing, apply a few drops of your expressed milk to your nipples and let them air dry
- If soreness continues, talk to the nurse caring for your baby, the lactation consultant or midwife.

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. 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 may help increase your milk supply

- Expressing at least seven to eight times every day.
- Expressing next to your baby's cot.

- Double expressing following 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 may 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 e.g. 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

Neonatal Nutrition room nurse - NICU:

(08) 6458 1190 (daily)

Lactation consultant - NICU:

(08) 6458 2222 or page 3462
(by appointment)

Midwife Ward 3B - PCH:

(08) 6456 3444 (daily)

Breastfeeding Centre - KEMH:

(08) 6458 1844 (Monday to Friday
8:00am to 4:00pm)

Australian Breastfeeding Association:

1800 686 268 (7-day helpline)

Breast milk expressing

Special care nursery 3

1



Wash hands with cleanser and water;
OR gel.

2



Select container to be used to collect
your milk.

5



Cap container of milk.

6



Wipe container of milk clean with
sanitising wipes, avoiding the label.

9



Place container of labelled milk in black box
on bottom shelf of nursery fridge.

10



Wipe down breast pump with
sanitising wipes.



3

Label container with yellow EBM sticker, Patient ID sticker and date/time of first expression.



4

Hand or pump express your milk.



7

Verify your container of milk with nurse.



8

Place green sticker on label.



11

After each use at metal sink, using bucket and brush: (i) rinse expressing kit with cold water; (ii) wash with hot water and detergent; (iii) rinse with hot water and dry with paper towel.



12

Twice daily, sterilise expressing kit in microwave using Medela sterilising bag, taking care to avoid steam vent.

Breast milk expressing

Special Care Nursery 2, Special Care Nursery 2 West,
High Dependency Unit and Satellite Nursery

1



Wash hands with cleanser and water;
OR gel.

2



Select container to be used to collect
your milk.

5



Cap container of milk.

6



Wipe container of milk clean with
sanitising wipes, avoiding the label.

9



Place container of labelled milk in black box
on bottom shelf of nursery fridge.

10



Wipe down breast pump with
sanitising wipes.



3

Label container with yellow EBM sticker, Patient ID sticker and date/time of first expression.



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Hand or pump express your milk.



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Verify your container of milk with nurse.



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Place green sticker on label.



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After each use at metal sink, using bucket and brush: (i) rinse expressing kit with cold water; (ii) wash with hot water and detergent; (iii) rinse with hot water and dry with paper towel.



12

Twice daily, sterilise expressing kit in microwave using Medela sterilising bag, taking care to avoid steam vent.

Breast milk expressing

At home

1



Wash hands with water and soap.

2



Label your KEMH approved container with yellow EBM sticker, infant ID sticker and date/time of first expression.

5



Place container of milk in back of fridge; cool further milk expressions in the fridge for 30 minutes before adding to the labelled KEMH container of cooled milk. Use fresh container after midnight.

6



When transporting milk to the hospital, place container of milk in insulated container with frozen ice brick.

9



Place verified container of milk in black box on the bottom shelf of nursery fridge.

10



After each use and using a brush: (i) rinse expressing kit with cold water; (ii) wash with hot water and detergent; (iii) rinse with hot water; air dry and/or dry with paper towel.

3



Hand or pump express your milk into your Medela bottle. Transfer your milk to your labelled KEMH approved container.

4



Cap container of milk.

7



On arrival at the hospital, show your milk in insulated container to the Milk Room nurse or the nurse caring for your infant.

8



Wipe container of milk with sanitising wipes, avoiding the label. Place green sticker on container of milk.

11



Twice daily, sterilise expressing kit in microwave using Medela sterilising bag, taking care to avoid steam vent.

12



At least once weekly, wipe down breast pump with damp cloth and a small amount of detergent, re-wipe with clean, damp cloth.



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Telephone: (08) 6456 2222

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