

## *Your important health information*

# Expressing breastmilk for women with diabetes during pregnancy

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If you have diabetes during your pregnancy, you may be asked to try expressing in pregnancy.

This is because your baby may have low blood sugar levels soon after birth. Even small amounts of breastmilk have been shown to support babies born with low sugar levels.

If you have diabetes in pregnancy, it is important to talk with your midwife and doctor to see if expressing breastmilk during pregnancy is right for you.

### **When would I start expressing?**

- No earlier than 36 weeks of pregnancy

### **How often do I express and for how long?**

- Hand express twice a day for about five minutes each breast at each session
- Do not use a manual or electric breast pump

### **How much breastmilk will I get?**

- About 1 in 4 women will get no breastmilk and this is normal for some
- If you can express breastmilk the amount is often quite small, about 5ml in total (overall for all expressions, not each time)

### **How do I collect and store the breastmilk?**

- We will give you syringes, caps and name labels
- Label the syringe and write the date and time of the first express of the day
- Refrigerate the milk after the first expression of the day. Then add to the same syringe for your second expression for the day
- Place any syringes into the freezer each evening
- Use a new syringe each morning

### **How do I hand express?**



1. Before expressing, wash your hands
2. Gently massage breasts
3. Place your thumb and fingers opposite each other around the edge of your areola

4. Press your thumb and forefinger back towards your chest and compress your fingers and thumb gently together with a slight forward movement. Avoid squeezing your nipple, this should not be painful.
5. Relax your fingers and thumb to lessen the squeeze but continue to keep your fingers/thumb touching your breast, continue to squeeze and relax, gradually moving your fingers around your areola to express your milk as much milk as possible
6. You can collect your milk directly into the syringe and seal with a purple cap.
7. You may find it easier to collect your milk onto a teaspoon which has been washed in hot soapy water and rinsed. Use the syringe to draw up the breastmilk from the spoon and seal it with a purple cap

For more information on hand expressing you can watch these videos:



*Hand expressing*, Australian Breastfeeding Association  
<https://www.breastfeeding.asn.au/resources/hand-expressing>



*Hand expression*, Unicef UK Baby Friendly Initiative  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K0zVCwdJZw0&t=18s>

### What should I look out for?

- Hand expressing while you are pregnant may cause some tightening (mild contractions) in your uterus
- It is unlikely that expressing will cause any problems, however, before you express at home it is important that you are not having any abdominal or labour pains, and your baby is moving normally

### If you notice any of the following things during or after expressing, you should stop expressing and contact your hospital

- Tightenings lasting more than one minute
- Regular tightenings (two or more in 10 minutes)
- Any bleeding
- A reduction in your baby's movements.

Mercy Hospital for Women	Werribee Mercy Hospital
<b>Fetal Monitoring Unit</b> Phone: 03 8458 4266	<b>Maternity Services</b> Phone: 03 8754 3412
<b>Emergency Department</b> Phone: 03 8458 400	

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

- Bring your frozen breastmilk with you when you come to hospital to have your baby.
- Please bring it packed in a small cooler bag with a frozen cold pack.
- When you arrive at the hospital give your milk to the midwife to store in the freezer.

## When your baby is born

- We will help you to breastfeed your baby as soon as possible after birth.
- Having your baby in skin-to-skin contact also helps to keep your baby warm and keep blood sugar levels stable.
- Breastfeed frequently – that is every time your baby shows interest in feeding, usually at least 8 to 12 times in 24 hours.
- Your baby's blood sugar levels will be tested and we will guide you with your feeding.

### Further Information

If you have any questions regarding this information, please contact:

#### **Mercy Hospital for Women**

Breastfeeding Support Service  
Phone: 03 8458 4677

#### **Werribee Mercy Hospital**

Breastfeeding Support Service  
Phone: 03 8754 3407

#### **Australian Breastfeeding Association Helpline**

Phone: 1800 686 2 68 (24hr/7days)

#### **Maternal & Child Health Helpline**

Phone: 13 22 29 (24hr/7days)

### Acknowledgements

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MHW

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This document provides general information only and is not intended to replace advice about your health from a qualified practitioner. If you are concerned about your health, you should seek advice from a qualified practitioner."