



**Children's Hospital**  
London Health Sciences Centre

**Patient Information**

## **WHAT IS COLOSTRUM?**

Colostrum is milk produced by your breasts during pregnancy in the first few days following delivery. It is yellow to orange in colour, thick and sticky.

**Colostrum is measurable in teaspoons, rather than ounces, but its value to your baby is measured like gold.**

Colostrum is extremely easy for your baby to digest. It has a laxative effect, helping him/her pass stool more easily.

Your colostrum not only provides perfect nutrition for your baby, but also helps to defend your baby against infection. Colostrum acts as a natural and safe vaccine against infection because it contains large numbers of antibodies. These antibodies can provide protection at the mucous membranes in the throat, lungs and gut. Colostrum contains protective white blood cells that can destroy disease-causing bacteria and viruses. Providing this extra protection is especially important for a sick or premature baby.

### **How Do I Collect Colostrum?**

You will be taught how to express your breasts, both by hand and using an electric breast pump. It takes time and patience to learn to remove milk from your breasts. Give yourself time to practice and don't expect to express a big volume of colostrum. Every drop is important for your baby!

Hand expression can be done ideally within the first hour of birth. Begin by gently massaging your breasts, placing your hand supportively under the breast, surrounding the areola, and gently squeezing breast tissue together with your thumb and forefinger to express drops of colostrum.

You will require a hospital grade, electric pump with tubing to continue the collection of colostrum and to stimulate your breasts. The hospital has several pumps that you can use, and you will be given a list of businesses that will rent you a breast pump that you can use at home.

It is often difficult to express all your colostrum from breast pumping alone. Hand expression and breast massage will help you obtain the most colostrum for your baby.

- Try to begin using the electric pump within 6 hours after giving birth.
- Aim to have at least 8 pumping or hand expressing "events" per day.

This will help you to get enough colostrum for your baby's first feeds, help you to practice breast pumping techniques, and help your body to produce more milk sooner.

### **SAVE EVERY DROP OF COLOSTRUM THAT YOU CAN!**

You will be shown how to collect 1 or more drops (0.05 to 0.2 mL) of colostrum into 1 mL syringes. Once you have collected your colostrum, we ask that you label it with milk collection labels and give it to your baby's nurse in Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). This small dose of colostrum is also called "Oral Immune Therapy" or "OIT" and will be given to your baby as mouth care regularly, every 3 to 4 hours, in addition to breast milk feedings for as long as your baby is receiving mostly tube feedings.

A Lactation Consultant is available in the NICU to help you with any questions/concerns.



**EVERY DROP MATTERS!**