

Breastfeeding support, expressing your breastmilk, cup and syringe feeding your baby

Introduction

This leaflet provides you with information that you may need when you are breastfeeding, including sections about expressing your breastmilk by hand and by pump and syringe and cup feeding your baby.

The leaflet also gives you information on accessing breastfeeding support in Gloucestershire and National support helplines.

Expressing your breast milk by hand and by pump

You may want to express your breast milk if:

- you need help to latch your baby to the breast when the breast is full
- your breasts feel full and uncomfortable
- your baby is too small or sick to breastfeed
- you need to be away from your baby for more than a couple of hours
- you are returning to work and your baby will need a feed in your absence.

Helping your breast milk to flow

To express your breast milk you will need to sit upright for about half an hour, so it is important to feel comfortable.

To express as much breast milk as possible, you need to ‘let down’ your milk to help the milk flow more easily. The following advice may help.

Breast massage will help you to ‘let down’ your milk. Gently massage both of your breasts with your fingertips for a few minutes. Do not forget to massage underneath each breast as well. You will then need to roll your nipple between your finger and thumb for about 30 seconds.

Reference No.

GHPI1575_04_20

Department

Maternity

Review due

April 2023

Patient Information

You may find it easier to express your breast milk just after you have been cuddling or with your baby.

If you are in the Neonatal Unit, you can either use the expressing room on the unit or express by your baby's cot side. Being near your baby will help when you are expressing your milk.

If your baby is not next to you having a picture of your baby or some clothes that they have been wearing may help. Staff on the Neonatal Unit may offer you bonding squares; these are square cloths one for you and one for baby. One square is in with your baby and one square mum wears, they are then swapped over so baby has something that smells of mum and mum has something that smells of her baby. The smell of your baby can help you to let down your milk.

Warmth can also help you to let down your milk. Having a warm bath or shower before expressing may help; alternatively you can use a warm flannel to massage your breasts as you express.

You can express your breast milk by hand or by using a breast pump.

Whichever method you choose, good hand hygiene and sterilising of the equipment is very important.

Hand expressing

This is a convenient way of expressing milk and is useful if you need to relieve an uncomfortable breast. The following instructions will act as a guide but the best way to learn is to practice so that you find what works best for you.

Underneath your areola, the brown area around your nipple, there are milk ducts. Sometimes you can feel the ducts as little pea-like structures under the skin or you may just feel a difference in the tissue.

Each breast is made up of segments, each segment produces milk.

**Patient
Information**

How to hand express

1. Cup your breast and feel backwards about 2 to 3 cms away from the base of the nipple where the skin texture changes from soft to pea-like.
2. Using your thumb and fingers in a C shape gently press backwards and squeeze this area. This should not hurt.
3. Release the pressure and then in back and forwards motions repeat again and again, to build up a rhythm. Avoid sliding your fingers over the skin. At first, only drops will appear but as you continue this should increase and milk will flow more freely.
4. When the flow of milk slows down, move your fingers round to try a different section of your breast and repeat. When you have done this for all sections of that breast and the flow has slowed you should swap to the other breast. Keep swapping breasts until the milk flow slows right down or stops altogether. If your milk does not flow, try moving your fingers slightly towards the nipple or further away. You could also try repeating gentle breast massage.

How to use a hand pump

1. After preparing your breasts with a few minutes of breast massage, put the funnel of the pump against your breast, with the nipple central. Check that there is a good seal between your breast and the funnel.
2. Use your fingertips on the lever to create the suction to express your milk. It may take a minute or two for your breast milk to start flowing.
3. Continue using gentle suction until the milk flows then swap the breast pump to the other breast. Express again until the flow slows. Then swap back and express again until the flow slows then go to the second breast and so on until you have expressed each breast 3 times. If your milk is still flowing, you may need to express each breast for a 4th time.
4. By switching breasts every few minutes (instead of expressing your first breast for 10 minutes then your second breast for 10 minutes), you will express much more milk.

**Patient
Information**

How to use an electric breast pump?

As with other methods of expressing, breast massage before starting to pump will help your 'let down' reflex.

There are many different types of electric breast pumps. Read the manufacturer's instructions for the pump you are using before starting to express your milk.

Single pumping

When the funnel of the pump is against your breast, it may take 1 to 2 minutes before your milk starts to flow. If your milk stops flowing from the breast that you are expressing, stop the pump and switch to the other breast.

Double or dual pumping

This is quicker and you are more likely to express more breast milk this way and more hindmilk (a more fat/calorie laden milk).

You need to place the 2 collection sets against your breasts, then switch on the pump. You then need to express for 10 to 15 minutes or until your milk stops flowing. If your milk stops flowing before this time, stop the pump for about 1 minute then start again. This will give you time to let down more milk.

How much suction/vacuum to use?

You will need to gently increase the vacuum until you find the level that is comfortable for you. Increasing the vacuum will not help your milk to flow; it will just give you sore nipples so please go gently.

How often do I need to express my breast milk?

This depends upon your circumstances and your baby's needs.

- If your baby is not taking breastfeeds and you are expressing milk to build up and maintain your milk supply; you will need to express at least 8 to 10 times in 24 hours. The times do not have to be set regularly apart. It is beneficial to your milk supply if you could express during the night. Try not to leave it longer than 4 hours in the daytime and 6 hours at night.
- You will need to express your milk after each feed that you have offered your baby if they are not taking the breast well.
- If you are going back to work and want to build up a supply of frozen breast milk – it is a good idea to start expressing a few weeks before.

You do not need to express a whole feed at a time, some mothers express a little at a time then build up a feed. You could express one breast while your baby is feeding from the other. You could also use breast shells to collect the drips from one breast while feeding from the other.

Milk collected in breast shells will be low fat milk. It will therefore be suitable as a drink for the baby but will not be enough for a satisfying feed.

How do I store my breast milk?

If you are in hospital please ask a member of staff to put your breast milk in the ward fridge straight after you have expressed. All milk must be labelled with your name, date, and time expressed.

You can store your breast milk at room temperature for up to 4 hours in the hospital. However at home you can keep it at room temperature for up to 6 hours. If your fridge is between 0 and 4°C, milk can be stored for up to 5 days. If the temperature is between 4 and 9°C then only store the milk for 48 hours.

If you are in hospital, the breast milk needs to be used within 48 hours.

Patient Information

For well babies on the postnatal ward or at home:

You can put 3 expressions of milk into 1 container. For example if you cool your breast milk in the fridge first, you can then add it to the container of expressed milk from the last time. Always put the date and time from the first milk expressed.

For babies on the Neonatal Unit

It is recommended that only 1 expression per container. Breast milk can be stored up to 6 months in a freezer or for 1 week in an icebox freezer, it is not safe to refreeze defrosted breast milk.

If your baby was born preterm, you should throw away your breast milk after 3 months as the content changes and may be unsuitable for an older baby.

If you are going to use a bottle to freeze your breast milk in, leave a couple of centimetres gap at the top as the milk will expand when frozen.

The easiest way to thaw frozen breast milk is to leave it in the fridge overnight. Alternately you can stand the container in hot water to defrost the breast milk. Defrosted breastmilk must be used within 24 hours.

Do not use a microwave to warm up your breast milk as microwaving destroys many of the protective immune qualities, you may also get hot spots which can burn your baby's mouth.

If you are going out and need to transport your refrigerated breastmilk it can be kept in a cool bag with ice blocks for up to 24hrs, as long as it is kept at a temperature no warmer than 4°C.

What colour should my breast milk be?

The colour of breast milk varies from mother to mother. Colostrum (the milk produced in the first few days) can look yellow or creamy. As your milk 'comes in' it can look more watery and take on a blueish tinge. Some mother's milk can look to be tinged with green, orange or black – this can be due to dietary supplements that the mother is taking. This does not affect your baby.

**Patient
Information**

Blood in breast milk is most likely from cracked nipples; this milk will not harm your baby but please speak to a healthcare professional if you are worried.

How much breast milk should I be expressing?

The amount of breast milk that you express will vary. If you are concerned about the amount of breast milk you are expressing please discuss it with a healthcare professional they may be able to offer some suggestions or refer you to the Infant Feeding Team.

If your supply seems low, you may want to try putting your baby to your breast more often. If your baby is unwell or too small to breastfeed yet, have lots of skin to skin cuddles. Let your baby be close to your breast – this will encourage your breastfeeding hormones to make more milk.

NHS

Website: www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/pages/expressing-storing-breast-milk.aspx

Baby Friendly Initiative

Website: <https://www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly/baby-friendly-resources/breastfeeding-resources/hand-expression-video/>

Supporting breastfeeding

Hand expressing will make sure that your milk supply is stimulated and that your baby gets breastmilk while your baby learns to feed from your breast.

You should try to avoid giving your baby a teat until they have begun breastfeeding, as sucking on a teat requires a different action to suckling on the breast.

If you give your baby a teat while they are learning to breastfeed they may prefer sucking on the teat and find it difficult to suckle at the breast.

Patient Information

If your baby is finding it hard to breastfeed, you can give them your breastmilk using the following methods:

- From your clean finger straight into the mouth
- Using a small feeding syringe
- Using a sterilised feeding cup

Which method you use depends on how much milk you need to give to your baby and how old your baby is. Your midwife will advise you.

Hand expressing

On the first day, when you are hand expressing your breastmilk, it may be easier to put each drop of colostrum (first milk) onto your finger and put it straight into your baby's mouth.

You can also use a 1 ml syringe to collect the drops of breastmilk as you express them, then syringe feed it to your baby. Staff will show you how to do this.

How to syringe feed your baby safely

Syringe feeding is suitable for the first few days when your baby needs small amounts of expressed breastmilk (less than 5 ml) quite often.

You must hold your baby upright and gently syringe no more than 0.2 ml (very small amounts), into their mouth, in between their gum and cheek.

You should then watch your baby swallow then gently squeeze in another 0.2 ml. Stop, let your baby swallow the milk, then carry on repeating this until the feed is ended.

It is not appropriate to use a syringe to feed your baby more than 5 ml because of the risk of your baby choking.

Once you are feeding your baby more than 5 ml of breastmilk, the staff will show you how to cup feed.

It is important that you continue to offer plenty of chances for your baby to start breastfeeding by using skin to skin contact and offering the breast when your baby is calm.

**Patient
Information**

Getting ready to cup feed

Always wash your hands before you start.

If you are in hospital, wash the cup and then sterilise it in the microwave using a microwavable bag, following the instructions on the bag.

Leave the cup to cool before using it. If you are at home, you can use steam or cold water sterilisation.

Pour the breastmilk you have expressed into the cup ready to feed your baby, there should be no more than 20mls in the cup. Wrap your baby securely in a cot sheet to keep their hands out of the way. This will not only stop your baby from knocking the cup out of your hand, but it will also make it easier for the next step.

Cup feeding helps you to work towards breastfeeding because it encourages your baby to use their tongue and lower jaw to take the milk in a similar way to breastfeeding. Your baby will also be able to smell and enjoy the milk. Some babies need only 1 or 2 cup feeds, while others need to use a cup for longer. Remember, that your aim is for your baby to breastfeed, and using a cup rather than a bottle will help you do this. Please ask for as much help as you need in moving your baby from cup feeding to breastfeeding.

How to cup feed safely

Sit your baby upright on your knee. Being upright will help prevent your baby from choking. You may want to use a cloth or a bib to catch any dribbled milk.

Place the cup so that it is gently resting on your baby's lower lip, but do not press down. Then tilt the cup so that your milk touches the baby's lip, then wait. Your baby will sniff the milk then make movements with their tongue to explore it. They will then start to lap, suck or drink the milk. All you need to do is to keep your baby upright and keep the cup still.

Do not tip the milk into their mouth as they could choke. The aim is for your baby to drink at their own speed.

Patient Information

Your baby will take a breather when they want by closing their lips firmly or by pulling away from the cup. When your baby has had a breather, let them start again. They will let you know when they have finished by closing their mouth.

When you have finished, wash the cup in warm soapy water then rinse and dry it. Keep the cup and sterilise it before the next feed.

Please view the Cup Feeding Video from Global Health Media:

<https://globalhealthmedia.org/portfolio-items/cup-feeding/>

Nipple shields

Nipple shields are often used to help babies to latch. It is advised not to use the shields until the milk comes in. Colostrum is thick and gloopy and can often get stuck in the shield making your baby frustrated.

If you are using nipple shields you will be encouraged to express after a feed.

This is to establish a supply, as your baby is not fully on the nipple and they have to work longer and harder to get the same amount of milk, which often does not happen. This can then reduce the supply.

Once your milk supply is established and your baby becomes a more efficient feeder expressing will not always be necessary.

If breasts are soft after a feed there will be no need to express but if your breasts still feel full you should express to maintain a long term supply. If nipple shields are used then a plan needs to be made to help move to feeding directly from your breast. Your midwife will support you with this.

For further information on using nipple shields visit the Association of Breastfeeding Mothers website:

<https://abm.me.uk/breastfeeding-information/using-a-nipple-shield-with-a-breastfed-baby/>

**Patient
Information**

Breastfeeding support

If you have any questions or concerns about breastfeeding please speak to your maternity support worker, midwife or health visitor. You can also contact your local maternity unit at night.

Department	Telephone
Cheltenham Birth Centre	0300 422 2324
Gloucester Birth	0300 422 5523
The women's centre (Maternity Ward)	0300 422 5520 / 5519
Stroud Maternity	0300 421 8018
Infant Feeding Team Midwife (Maternity Ward)	0300 422 5520 / 5519
Sophie Ferguson – Infant Feeding Specialist Midwife	Referral by health professional

Breastfeeding support helplines and websites

Association of Breastfeeding Mothers

Tel: 0300 330 5453

Lines open from 9:30am to 10:30pm, 365 days a year

A Volunteer Support Worker is available

Website: <https://abm.me.uk/>

Breastfeeding Network 365 days a year

Tel: 0300 100 0212 (National Breastfeeding Helpline)

Line opens from 9:30am until 9:30pm (local rates apply)

Trained supporters available

Support is also available in Welsh and Polish

Website: www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk/

La Leche League

Tel: 0845 120 2918

Lines open 24 hours a day (local rates apply)

Peer counsellors available

Support is available in various languages

Website: www.laleche.org.uk/get-support

Patient Information

National Breastfeeding Helpline

Tel: 0300 100 0212

Lines open from 9:30am to 9:30pm, 365 days

A Volunteer Support Worker is available

Website: www.nct.org.uk/

National Childbirth Trust (NCT)

Tel: 0300 330 0771

Line opens from 8:00am to midnight, 365 days (national rates apply)

Breastfeeding Counsellor available

Website: www.nct.org.uk/

NHS Choices

Website: www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/Pages/benefits-breastfeeding.aspx

Gloucestershire Maternity Voices

Website: www.glosmaternityvoices.nhs.uk/pregnant-your-options/your-baby-and-you/

Further information about breastfeeding can be found at the following websites:

NHS Website: www.nhs.uk/start4life/baby/breastfeeding

Baby Friendly Initiative

Website: www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly

Local breastfeeding support provided by volunteers

The National Childbirth Trust has volunteers who offer breastfeeding counselling in your local area. The volunteers offer support over the telephone from their home and can be contacted using the numbers on the next page.

**Patient
Information**

Area Covered	Name	Contact details	Available
Evesham	Jane	01386 765 798	Daytime/ evening
Pershore	Anny	07973548119 annyjames2308@yahoo.co	Will return your message
Coleford	Rachel	rlwwhittington@aol.com	Anytime
Gloucester	Elizabeth	07938 832 145	Text
Gloucester / Cheltenham	Lisa	Lionel14372@gmail.com	Daytime/ evening
Cheltenham	Rachel	Rachel@tenderfoot.me.uk	Anytime
Stroud	Meg	01453 884 268 07970 434 316	Daytime/ evening
Stroud	Julia	07864677645 Julia.constable@googlemail.com	Daytime/ evening
Cirencester	Nikki	01285 720 452	Daytime/ evening
Tewkesbury	Katy	07946542195	Daytime/ evening

Gloucestershire Breastfeeding Support Network (GBSN)

The GBSN network has groups located throughout Gloucestershire that provide information and 'mother to mother' support about breastfeeding. You can have a free fitting of a nursing bra, which you can purchase after the fitting. You can borrow books or just come for a chat and a coffee. All groups have a breastfeeding counsellor present.

Groups are closed on bank holidays. Please check the website for the latest updates before attending:

www.breastfeedingsupporters.org.uk

**Patient
Information****Breastfeeding and Peer Support (BAPS)**

Group meets every Tuesday at 10:00am to 12:00pm at Hester's Way Children's Centre (next to the Primary School, Village Road, Dill Avenue, Cheltenham, GL51 0ES). A large playroom is available, and toddlers are welcome. Parking is available in the school car park.

Mothers Offering Breastfeeding Support (MOBS)

In Dursley meet every Monday at 10:00am to 12:00pm in the Parish Room at St James' Parish Church, Dursley, GL11 4JE.

Mothers Offering Breastfeeding Support (MOBS)

In Stroud meet every Thursday at 10:00am to 12:00pm in Rodborough Community Hall, Butterow West, Stroud GL5 3TZ.

Churchdown Region Information and Breastfeeding Support (CRIBS)

Meet every Thursday at 9:30am to 11:30am in St John's Church Hall, St John's Avenue, Churchdown, GL3 2DB.

Breastfeeding and Babies Early Support (BABES)

Meet every Wednesday at 10:00am to 11:30pm in Noah's Ark Children's Centre, York Road Priors Park, and Tewkesbury, GL20 5HU.

Breastfeeding Encouragement and Support Team (BEST)

Meet every Thursday at 10:00am to 11:30am in Springboard Children's Centre, Trinity Road Cirencester, GL7 1JU.

Gardner's Lane Offering Breastfeeding Encouragement and Support (GLOBES)

Meet every Thursday at 12:30pm to 2:00pm in Gardner's Lane Children's Centre, Cheltenham, GL51 5JA.

Evesham Breastfeeding Mothers Meet every Friday at 12:00pm to 2:00pm at the Baptist Church, Cowl Street, Evesham, WR11 4PN. Contact Jane (Breastfeeding Counsellor) on Tel: 01386 765 798.

**Patient
Information****Feeding Group**

Group meets every Tuesday 10:00am to 11:30am at Springboard Children's Centre, St Edwards Drive, Stow-on-the-Wold GL5 1AW. Health Visitors are present to offer feeding support. Contact the Children's Centre about opening times over the Bank Holiday periods.

The Breastfeeding Network

Gloucestershire Baby Feeding Service

Who are we?

We are all local mums who have breastfed our own children and have trained to be breastfeeding helpers and supporters with the Breastfeeding Network. If you decide you would like this support in addition to the support provided by your midwife and health visitor, you may see a BfN helper on the maternity ward or you can call Toni on 07936 391 085 to find your nearest local support.

What do we do?

We provide friendly help, information and support about breastfeeding through texts, phone calls and drop-in groups. You can get the breastfeeding support that you want, when you want it and for as long as you need.

What next?

If you live in Gloucester and would like help with breastfeeding please call or text Toni on:

Tel: 07936 391 085

Monday to Friday, 9:00am to 5:00pm

Leave your name, telephone number and postcode. We will let you know if there is a Breastfeeding Network supporter in your area and put you in touch with them. If you are calling over the weekend we will return your call on Monday.

BfN run breastfeeding support groups where you can get support and information about all aspects of feeding your baby, as well as meeting other mums and sharing experiences over a cup of tea.

Patient Information

All BfN Feeding Support Workers at the groups can give information about going back to work, expressing and storing, introducing solids and stopping breastfeeding when you and your baby are ready.

Mondays

Feeding support worker at River children's centre, Naas Lane, Lydney, GL15 5AU between 12:30pm and 2:00pm (term time only).

Feeding support worker at The Link Children's Centre, Matson Avenue Gloucester, GL4 6BE between 10:30am and 12:00 noon.

Wednesdays Lactation Station at Newent Fire Station, Bridge Street, Newent GL18 1BB between 10:00am and 12:00 noon.

Fridays Mamma Latte at The Beacon Children's Centre, Valley Gardens, Kingsway, GL2 2BS between 1:00pm and 2:30pm.

Feeding support worker at La La Lounge Parent and baby group, the Museum, Brunswick Road Gloucester, GL1 1HT between 10:30 and 12:00 noon.

Saturdays

Feeding support worker alongside midwife clinic in the Woman's Centre, Gloucestershire Royal Hospital, GL1 3NN between 10:00am and 12:00 noon. If you attend this session but only require feeding support please let the staff know when you arrive.

Electric breast pump

An electric breast pump is a mechanical device that will help to extract milk from your breasts. If you would like to hire an electric breast pump, please see the contact numbers listed on the next page. The cost of hiring a breast pump varies between suppliers.

**Patient
Information**

Area Covered	Name	Telephone	Contact times
Courier Delivery	Ardo	01823 336362	Monday to Friday, 9:00am to 5:00pm
Courier Delivery	Medela Uk	01617 760400	Monday to Thursday, 8:30am to 4:30pm Friday, 8:30am to 4:00pm
Stroud	Meg (Ardo, renting)	01453 884268 07970434316	Daytime/evening

Content reviewed: April 2020