

Guideline for Antenatal Expressing

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Target Audience:

People who need to know about this document in detail	All midwifery, nursing, maternity care assistants, nursery nurses, obstetric and neonatal staff working within maternity and neonatal services
People who need to have a broad understanding of this document	As above
People who need to know that this document exists	As above

Integrated Impact Assessment:

Equality Impact Assessment Date & Outcome	Date: October 2025 Outcome: No negative impact
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Initiated by: Rosanne Phillips

Date approved:

Date reviewed:

Disclaimer:

If the review date of this document has passed please ensure that the version you are using is the most up to date version either by contacting the author or [CTM Corporate Governance@wales.nhs.uk](mailto:CTM_Corporate_Governance@wales.nhs.uk)

Initiated by: Rosanne Phillips
Date approved:
Date reviewed:

Guidelines for Antenatal Expressing

Guidelines definition

Clinical guidelines are systemically developed statements that assist clinicians and patients in making decisions about appropriate treatments for specific conditions.

They allow deviation from a prescribed pathway according to the individual circumstances and where reasons can be clearly demonstrated and documented.

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Rationale

Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board is a Unicef Baby Friendly (BFI) accredited service and seeks to maintain the Baby Friendly standards and to work towards the Welsh Government and CTM Infant Feeding [Strategy](#) goal of "More babies breastfeeding, for longer."

The purpose of this document is to encourage antenatal expression of colostrum where appropriate and consequently to increase breastfeeding confidence and to reduce supplementation with infant formula for infants on the hypoglycaemic pathway.

Definition

Antenatal expressing refers to hand expressing colostrum during pregnancy.

Aims of guideline

- To identify the benefits of antenatal expression of colostrum.
- To identify women and families for whom it may be particularly beneficial and note contraindications.
- To provide guidance for appropriate timing and technique.
- To provide guidance on storage and use of expressed colostrum.

The Benefits of Antenatal expression of Colostrum.

Breastfeeding is the healthiest way for a woman to feed her baby and CTM UHB acknowledges the important health benefits known to exist for the mother and her child and also in terms of the wider public health agenda.

- Antenatal hand expressing (from 36 weeks of pregnancy) can either be for 'Personal milk banking' i.e preparatory collection and storage of colostrum ready to give the baby if there are early feeding issues
- Simply for the purposes of breast preparation, priming and familiarisation to promote confidence in breast and lactation physiology.

Hand expressing is a learned skill and practice in pregnancy will help mothers to master it effectively. This will hopefully promote greater maternal confidence and colostrum being obtained more easily in the early postnatal period.

If colostrum is successfully obtained, then mother's own milk can be given to her baby in the early postnatal period via an assisted feeding method as a first line measure in the prevention of hypoglycaemia or when baby cannot be fed directly at the breast and in this way help to safeguard the dyad's ongoing breastfeeding journey.

Babies of mothers with diabetes of any aetiology and babies whose mothers

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have been on anti-hypertensives are at increased risk of hypoglycaemia in the early post-natal period. This often results in babies whose mothers intend to breastfeed, receiving formula milk.

Evidence suggests that the early introduction of formula will negatively impact on the success of breastfeeding and thus adversely affect the future health of both mother and child.

Research suggests that it is advisable to avoid early exposure to bovine products in the child of the diabetic mother as this has been associated with a subsequent increased risk of the child developing diabetes.

Who may benefit from antenatal hand expressing?

All women who are planning to breastfeed or who wish to give colostrum as the ideal first feed may benefit from antenatal expressing. It may be particularly beneficial to express colostrum in situations when babies are likely to be at risk of hypoglycaemia/feeding difficulty after birth or when mothers are known to be at risk of low supply. These include:

- Women with diabetes.
- Women on anti-hypertensives.
- Babies small for gestational age.
- Likely early birth, planned elective caesarean or induction of labour.
- Multiple pregnancies.
- Babies with congenital anomalies identified, such as cleft lip/ palate.
- Women with a history of breast surgery, hypoplasia or hormonal disorders e.g. PCOS, thyroid disorders.
- Women with a high BMI
- Strong family history of allergies (to reduce any potential need for early formula supplementation, which is known to increase the chance of allergic sensitisation).
- Women with some types of infertility requiring assisted conception techniques.

Contraindications

Nipple and breast stimulation (and consequent release of oxytocin) has been suggested as a means of performing contraction stress tests and inducing labour. The evidence for induction of labour remains unclear however it would be prudent to avoid advocating antenatal hand expressing (even in the above groups) when the mother has any of the following issues:

- Low lying placenta in order to reduce any potential risk of ante-partum haemorrhage.
- History of uterine pain,
- History of ante-partum haemorrhage,

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- Multiple pregnancy with risk factors apparent
- Cervical suture in situ
- Fetal compromise where uterine tightening might cause complications.
- When a pregnant woman has been advised to refrain from sexual intercourse for the well-being of her pregnancy

Expressing before 36 weeks

Early colostrum is vital for the wellbeing of preterm babies. Expressing should not be routinely recommended before 36 weeks, however if an early birth is planned then it can be discussed on an individual basis with obstetric/neonatal input as appropriate.

Examples:

- Where a multiple birth by caesarean is planned it may be appropriate to recommend antenatal expressing from a few days before birth.
- Where a woman is admitted for a course of steroids prior to a planned preterm birth expressing may be appropriate at any gestation.

Technique

All midwives and maternity staff should have completed the BFI training and be confident demonstrating hand expressing. Breast models are available in all clinical areas and should be used. The technique should be taught as per the following Baby Friendly resource:

Hand expression video - Baby Friendly Initiative (unicef.org.uk)

<https://youtu.be/K0zVCwdJZw0>

Storage

1ml colostrum syringes should be provided for collection and storage. Gallipots can also be used (and sterilised and reused). Colostrum should be stored in the back of the fridge or freezer. Colostrum collected over a 24-

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hour period can be cooled to the same temperature in the fridge, combined and frozen.

Storage containers should be labelled with the mother's details and time and date of (earliest) expression.

Frozen colostrum should ideally be transported frozen in a cool bag with ice blocks if brought to hospital and should be stored in the freezer until required.

Human milk defrosters/warmers are available in the postnatal wards.

Colostrum expressed in hospital can be stored in the fridge for up to 48 hours and fresh colostrum should be used before frozen.

Antenatal conversations

Antenatal expressing should be discussed with **all women** at 34 or 36 weeks. All women should be provided with syringes/sterile gallipot and the Health Board leaflet. They can be directed to Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board Breastfeeding Network (Facebook) or the Health Board website for further information or support. Breastfeeding classes are also available via Tirion Birth Centre.

Related guidelines

[CTM Infant Feeding Guideline.](#)

wisdom.nhs.wales/health-board-guidelines/cwm-taf-maternity-file/policy-for-the-safe-management-of-expressed-breast-milk-on-the-maternityneonatal-unit/

wisdom.nhs.wales/health-board-guidelines/cwm-taf-maternity-file/alternative-methods-of-feeding-for-breastfed-babies/

Useful links

<https://abm.me.uk/breastfeeding-information/antenatal-expression-colostrum/>

<https://www.gestationaldiabetes.co.uk/colostrum-harvesting/>

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References

Advising women with diabetes in pregnancy to express breastmilk in late pregnancy (Diabetes and Antenatal Milk Expressing [DAME]): a multicentre, unblinded, randomised controlled trial - The Lancet

Chapman T, Pincombe J, Harris M. (2012) Antenatal breast expression: A critical review of the literature. Midwifery. 2012 Feb 16 PubMed

Zanardo et al (2010). Elective Cesarean Delivery: Does It Have a Negative Effect on Breastfeeding? [Birth](#)

Regan J (2013) The Influence of Mode of Delivery on Breastfeeding Initiation in Women with a Prior Cesarean Delivery: A Population-Based Study [Breastfeeding medicine](#)

Betsi Cadwaladar, [ANTENATAL HAND EXPRESSING – BREAST PRIMING AND COLOSTRUM COLLECTION](#), 2023.