

This leaflet is designed to provide parents of premature babies with information about expressing breastmilk in both the short and long term.

Breastmilk provides your premature baby with milk that is unique to their needs. Your milk contains the correct nutritional requirements and additional infection fighting properties.

Even if you do not want to commit to breastfeeding long-term, it is possible and beneficial to express milk for the time your baby is in NICU.

It is important to start expressing milk as early as possible following the birth, preferably within 6 hours. This will help stimulate your milk supply and help with long term milk production.

### Important facts

Amounts of milk expressed will vary in quantity and appearance over a day.

Don't compare the volumes of milk you produce with other mothers, as every baby's requirements are different.

If you can, try to keep expressing even if the volume you get is low. It may remain low for several weeks. It will increase when your baby starts to breastfeed.

### Factors that will help stimulate and increase milk supply

- Frequent expressing including at night
- 3 hourly during the day and 4 hourly at night
- Expressing next to your baby
- Skin-to-skin cuddles

- Putting baby to the breast as soon as possible
- Breast massage
- Try different methods of expressing
- Get involved with helping develop the baby's feeding plan

### Check the following if your supply drops

- Has your expressing routine changed?
- Are you worried about your baby?
- How is your own health? A busy home or increased commitments outside the home may affect your supply
- Are you managing to eat regularly, along with plenty of snacks in between?
- Are you drinking enough water?
- Are you on medications that may affect supply, such as the combined contraceptive pill?
- Increased tension or stress is a common cause of reduced supply
- It is also worth asking someone to check your expressing technique
- Make sure your breast shield size is correct, as it is very common for mothers to need a different size after a few weeks of expressing

### A decreasing milk supply

It is very common with long term expressing for there to be a drop off in supply around 4-6 weeks. This can be a very worrying time. It is also common for the flow to take longer to start.

[continued]

## Things that may help are:

- Increase expressing to 2-3 hourly for at least 48 hours
- Double pumping may help when expressing frequently. Ask staff for advice
- Try hand expressing for a few minutes to get the flow started, before using the pump
- Use breast compression while pumping. (youtube clips on-line)
- Use warm flannels on your breast
- Have someone give you a back or shoulder massage
- Soft music or imagery (thinking of your baby, looking at a picture or video clip)
- Expressing after a skin to skin cuddle or beside baby
- Try to reduce distractions while expressing
- Try keeping a record of your supply. It will help give you an overall picture of the volume you are expressing each time
- Take a break occasionally from expressing for a good night's sleep, but remember, it is really important to continue with regular expressing especially at night when the breastfeeding hormone is at its highest if your production is reducing

Whether you are expressing in the short or long term, it can be very stressful and your supply may be affected by the health of your baby. Your breastmilk is very important for your baby. Expressing is a positive thing that you as a new mother can do for your baby. Support from family and staff are important in helping you through this time.

There are various medications and herbal preparations that may help increase supply, but check with your LMC, GP, midwife, Lactation Consultant or NICU nurse if these are suitable for you. A good diet, 3 meals a day plus nutritional snacks, drinking plenty of water and making sure

that you rest during the daytime, will help you keep your supply going.

## Stopping pumping

Pumping should be stopped gradually rather than suddenly. Ideally this process should take 4-5 days. It is important for the hormone level to gradually decrease, minimizing any discomfort you may experience.

You can either reduce the number of times you express each day, or express off a reduced amount each time.

At all times, check your breasts for increased tenderness, lumpiness or redness and seek help from your LMC/Midwife/GP if there is no improvement or you are feeling unwell.