

If you have any questions, ask your physician, nurse or lactation consultant.

Feeding Your Newborn: The First 24 Hours

Our staff at Northwestern Memorial Hospital support you and your family's choices about the way you want to feed your baby. If you choose to breastfeed, feed your baby formula or do a combination of both, please make sure you talk with your nurse. This is important so we can best help and prepare you and your baby to go home.

Feeding sessions

Newborn babies under 24 hours old are usually more interested in sleeping than eating. We still want to encourage the newborn to eat 8 to 12 times in 24 hours (about every 2 to 3 hours) right from the start. A newborn's stomach can hold up to 5 to 7 milliliters (ml) per feeding in the first day of life. That is the size of a marble.

You may need to help your baby wake up during these feeding sessions. These are ways to wake your baby to eat:

- Put baby skin to skin with you
- Take baby's clothes off
- Change baby's diaper
- Softly sing or talk to baby
- Lightly touch or stroke baby

If your baby is not latching or sucking, do not worry. This is normal behavior for babies less than 24 hours of life.

Hand expression

Colostrum is the body's first stage of milk. It has antibodies that can help keep your baby healthy. It also helps the baby pass meconium (first stool).

Expressing colostrum by hand and massaging your breasts are great ways to stimulate the breasts to start making milk. Hand expression often makes more colostrum than a breast pump in the 1st few days after delivery. Massaging the breasts can also increase the overall amount of breastmilk you make.

How to express by hand

You will start hand expression with one breast at a time.

1. **Wash** your hands before you begin hand expression.
2. **Massage** the breast in a gentle, circular motion using your hands. This helps to start moving the colostrum.
3. **Position** your thumb and first 2 fingers in a “C” shape. Place them about 1 to 2 inches behind your nipple. This can be in any direction around the areola (darker skin around the nipple) since your milk ducts surround the whole breast.
4. **Press** your fingers and thumb back towards your chest. Do not widen your fingers and stretch the skin around the areola and nipple.
5. **Squeeze** your breast with your thumb and fingers. Gently slide them forward towards the nipple. Release and repeat. Continue to move your hand around your breast to express the whole breast.

Feeding colostrum to your baby

After expressing colostrum, you can collect it in a medicine cup your nurse gives you. Then using a syringe, you can draw up the colostrum and give it to your newborn. Use a new medicine cup and a new syringe for each feeding.

Hand expression, massaging and pumping breastmilk will help if you need to supplement your baby’s feedings for any reason.

To learn more

For more information about feeding your baby:

- Read the “*Expressing Breastmilk*” section in the booklet “*Understanding Postpartum Health and Baby Care: A Guide to the First Few Days & Weeks*”
- Watch the video “*Hand Expression*” at firstdroplets.com/downloads

