

# Making Breast Milk When Your Baby is Premature

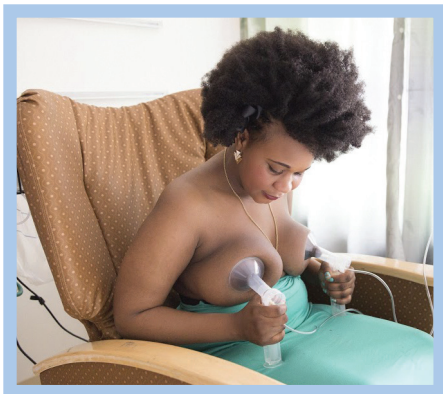
**Babies born very early usually need to stay in the neonatal intensive care unit. Your breast milk is a medicine and a food for your baby. It is important to start making breast milk as soon as possible after birth. The sooner you start, the more milk you will make for your baby.**



*Syringe filled with colostrum*



*Baby receiving colostrum in a syringe*



*Pumped breast milk*



*Mother hand expressing*

## The first drops of breast milk are called “colostrum”

- Colostrum comes as tiny drops of milk that can look yellow. Colostrum has special nutrients that can help prevent infections.
- Many people call colostrum “liquid gold” because it is so special.
- You can use a breast pump and your hands to get colostrum. Try to collect your colostrum as soon as possible after birth so that it is ready for your baby as soon as he or she needs it. The sooner you start trying, the more milk you’ll make.
- Nurses can give your baby your colostrum, even if he or she is not big enough to feed from a bottle yet.

## Making more milk over time

- After a few days, your milk will change. It will look whiter and you’ll be making a lot more of it.
- This milk usually comes about 3 to 5 days after you have your baby, or sometimes even longer after you have a premature baby, a cesarean section, or if you received certain medications before or during your delivery.
- This is the milk your baby needs to grow.

## How often should I use the breast pump?

- Pump at least 8 times over 24 hours.
- Make sure to pump at night. It can be helpful to set an alarm to wake you up to pump.
- It is normal in the first few days to make only a few drops of colostrum. Even if you don’t see much milk at first, pumping a lot in the beginning will help you make more milk in the future.

## Hand expression

- You can also get milk out of your breasts by using your hand to spray milk directly into a small cup.
- Hand expression can be done right after or even before you give birth.
- Hand expression can be done at the same time or just after breast pumping to make more milk.

## How do I get help with pumping or hand expression?

- Lactation consultants (these are experts specially trained to help you breastfeed) or nurses can help you to use the breast pump and learn hand expression.
- Help and support can also come from your family and friends.