

# HAND EXPRESSING

These brief education refresher sheets are designed for staff as a teaching aid during the coronavirus outbreak. Staff may include return to practice midwives or health visitors, students who have been fast-tracked to practice or health care assistants who have been redeployed into postnatal care within hospital or community settings. This information is an interim measure to help staff provide support and does not replace training. The links and information provided can be used by staff and shared with parents.

## HAND EXPRESSION: OVERVIEW

The Unicef UK Baby Friendly Initiative recommends all breastfeeding mothers are shown how to hand express their breastmilk. This can:

- tempt baby to feed and/or provide colostrum if he is a little sleepy during the first few days
- stimulate milk production and provide colostrum for sick/preterm babies on the neonatal unit
- help mothers to soften breasts by removing a little milk if they become full
- help mothers to self-manage blocked ducts and can prevent and reduce [symptoms of mastitis](#)
- provide an alternative to giving a supplement if the baby is not feeding effectively\*

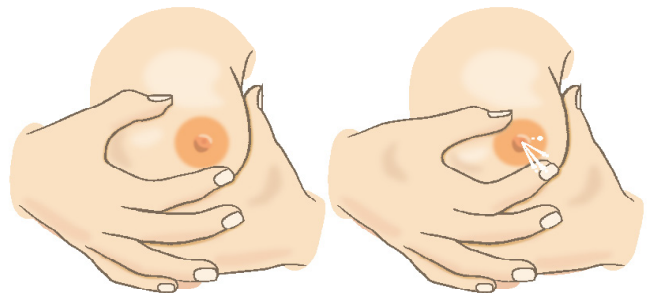
## SUPPLEMENTATION: QUICK REVIEW

\*Supplements of infant formula should be avoided unless there is a clinical reason or the mother has made a fully informed decision to use them. Offering feeding support, encouraging skin-to-skin contact and providing expressed colostrum/milk may help avoid unnecessary supplements. If a supplement is given, always support the mother to maintain milk supply by feeding her baby or expressing her milk. Supplements should not be offered without consultation with an experienced member of staff.



## HOW TO HAND EXPRESS

1. Begin with a gentle breast massage to stimulate oxytocin release. Cup the breast with the thumb and fingers in a 'C' shape about 2–3 cm back from the base of the nipple.
2. Gently squeeze, bringing the fingers and thumb together in a rhythmic action (it may take a while for colostrum/milk to appear). If no milk appears after a few minutes, simply move the fingers a fraction forward or back to find the right spot.
3. Continue this action until no more milk drops come out and then, if necessary, move the fingers around to express from a different section of the breast. Avoid any sliding of fingers as this can cause damage to breast tissue
4. Milk can be collected in a sterile cup or bottle, or in the case of colostrum can be 'sucked up' in a small syringe.



## BREASTFEEDING AND HEALTH

For additional information on hand expression, see the below resources:

- The Unicef UK Baby Friendly Initiative hand expression video can be shown to mothers on a smart phone or other device. If you are unsure of how to talk a mother through this, ask a more experienced colleague for help: [unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly/baby-friendly-resources/breastfeeding-resources/hand-expression-video/](https://www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly/baby-friendly-resources/breastfeeding-resources/hand-expression-video/)
- Start4Life expressing and bottle feeding guidance: [nhs.uk/start4life/baby/](https://www.nhs.uk/start4life/baby/)