Children’s Health Ireland at Crumlin, encourage mothers to provide breast milk for their babies when they are in hospital. All babies whether well or sick benefit from breast milk.

There are factors in breast milk that may help prevent infections. Breast milk is very easy for your baby to digest and specifically designed to meet each baby’s different needs.

When a baby is sick or born prematurely and in hospital, you may need support and guidance to breastfeed.

This leaflet should give you guidance and support to breastfeeding your sick baby in OLCHC.
### Frequently Asked Questions

#### Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Why should I breastfeed</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) How do I express my breastmilk?</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Which expressing method do I use?</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Is it better to hand express or use the breast pump to express?</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) How do I do ‘Hands on Pumping (HOP)?</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) Where can I express breastmilk in the hospital?</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) How soon can I start expressing?</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8) How do I prepare to express?</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9) How do I stimulate the ‘let down’ reflex just before expressing?</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10) What do I need if I want to hand express?</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11) Do I wash my hand before expressing? And how?</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12) How do I hand express?</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13) When and how do I clean and sterilise expressing equipment?</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14) How often should I express?</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15) How do I increase my breastmilk supply?</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16) Are there ways that I can establish a good breastmilk supply?</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17) What is skin-to-skin contact / kangaroo care?</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18) My breastmilk supply has reduced. Why?</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19) How long should I breastfeed each time?</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20) I am taking medications – what should I do?</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21) My nipples are sore. Why did this happen and what should I do?</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22) Should I try to stimulate my baby's suck when they are not feeding from the breast?</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23) What should I store the breast milk in?</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24) My baby is starting back on feeds. Which breast milk will they receive?</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25) Why does my breastmilk need to be fortified?</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26) Will I always have to tube feed my baby?</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27) What do I do with extra breast milk?</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28) What is a human milk bank?</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29) How do I wean correctly?</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30) How will I look after myself while expressing?</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31) Renting or buying a breast pump?</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32) References</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33) List of useful breastfeeding literature and websites</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1) WHY SHOULD I BREASTFEED?
The breast milk you provide for your baby is easier to digest and better suited to the needs of your baby than any other milk and particularly for premature babies. Breast milk is far more than food; it is more like a first vaccination. It is very rich in antibodies to fight germs your baby may come in contact with, so each drop is precious. It can protect against infection as babies who receive breast milk have fewer colds, diarrhoea, allergies and ear infections.

While your baby is sick, they may be unable to feed directly from the breast or their feeding pattern may change. Therefore, in order to establish and/or maintain your breast milk supply for when they are well enough to feed again, you should express your breast milk.

2) HOW DO I EXPRESS BREAST MILK?
You can express by the following methods:

**BREAST PUMPS**

- **MANUAL HAND-HELD PUMPS**, suction is created by squeezing a handle, which can be tiring after a while.

They are a cheaper option and are easily available to buy in your local pharmacy.

- **ELECTRIC PUMPS** are available in either hospital grade or hand-held versions.

- **ELECTRIC HOSPITAL GRADE PUMPS** are a good choice if you have to express for a long time or if expressing more than a couple of times a day. There are several types, and most can be adapted to allow single or double pumping. These pumps are expensive to buy but can be rented for home use. (See pg. 14)

- **MEDELA SYMPHONY** is the electric (hospital grade) breast pumps available in CHI at Crumlin.

- **ELECTRIC HAND-HELD PUMPS** are good for expressing for short periods or if expressing the ‘odd’ time. They are a cheaper option and are easily available to buy in your local pharmacy. They are available in battery or mains operated versions.

- Information sheets are attached to the electric (hospital grade) breast pumps within CHI at Crumlin about using the breastfeeding pump, and how to assemble, clean and sterilise the expressing sets.

- ‘HANDS ON PUMPING’ is a combination of both breast compression/breast massage while using an electric hospital grade pump (See pg. 4)

- **HAND EXPRESSING** is the most basic way of expressing and is an important skill to learn as it provides you with a way to relieve fullness or to express breast milk for your baby in any situation. It is also a convenient and cheap way to express.

3) WHICH EXPRESSING METHOD DO I CHOOSE?
Different methods of breast milk expression suit different mothers in different situations, so you should choose the one or several methods that best suit your needs and situation. Seek advice from your baby nurse to help you choose.
4) IS IT BETTER TO HAND EXPRESS OR USE THE BREAST PUMP TO EXPRESS?
Research has suggested that using a combined method of ‘Hands on Pumping’ (HOP) (Breast compression and breast massage) while pumping using a hospital grade electric pump will ensure you produce more breast milk.

5) HOW DO I DO ‘HANDS ON PUMPING (HOP)’?
‘Hands on pumping’ involves using breast compression and breast massage while using a breast pump. This technique has shown to increase the amount of breast milk mothers produce.

Breast compression consists of support your breast with your hand by placing your thumb on the upper side of your breast and your fingers on the other, close to your ribs. Squeeze the breast to increase the internal pressure of the whole breast.

- Do not roll the fingers along the breast, just squeeze and hold firmly (without causing discomfort).
- You should see some extra milk spurting into the funnel.
- Release the pressure when the flow slows again and repeat moving around the breast. When the flow of breast milk has stopped turn off the breast pump.

Massage your breasts for 1-2 minutes and express any remaining milk by pumping or hand expressing.

For this to be possible while double pumping, you may need to adapt a bra or buy a specially designed one (available to buy from http://www.onceborn.com) to hold the funnels leaving both your hands free to do HOP.

6) WHERE CAN I EXPRESS BREAST MILK IN THE HOSPITAL?
You can express breast milk in your baby’s room, in an expressing room where available on your babies ward (St. Peter’s Ward, Nazareth Ward), parents rooms (St Theresa’s Ward, PICU1, PICU2), in parent’s accommodation, or at home.

7) HOW SOON CAN I START EXPRESSING?
Ideally, the sooner you start expressing the better, as your breasts receive the message from your brain to make breast milk as soon as your baby is born. If your baby cannot start breastfeeding within the first few hours of birth, breast milk should be expressed. This is best done in the first few days of birth by hand expressing.

8) HOW DO I PREPARE TO EXPRESS?
Whether you are expressing by hand or by a pump, you need to stimulate your breasts to release breast milk. The release of milk from the breasts is called the ‘let down’ reflex. Your baby stimulates the ‘let down’ reflex by starting to suckle on your breast. If you are expressing, you must use other ways to stimulate the ‘let down’ reflex.

Warm moist compress such as a ‘face cloth’ can be placed on the breasts

9) HOW DO I STIMULATE THE ‘LET DOWN’ REFLEX JUST BEFORE EXPRESSING?
Give yourself plenty of time, do not feel rushed. Choose a comfortable seat and private place so that you can relax while expressing.

The ‘let down’ reflex can be stimulated by:
- Massage your breasts gently with your fingers. Massage in small circular motions around each breast from the chest towards the nipple. There is no right or wrong way to massage.
- Stroke your breasts from the chest towards the nipple with a light tickle-like stroke.
- Lean forward and shake your breasts gently.
- Warm moist compress such as a ‘face cloth’ can be placed on the breasts
WHAT DO I NEED IF I WANT TO HAND EXPRESS?
If expressing with a pump:
- Bowl / Container (Clean and Sterile)

DO I WASH MY HANDS BEFORE EXPRESSING, AND HOW?
You must wash your hands before handling breast milk and expressing equipment. This is to prevent dirty hands contaminating the breast milk.
Wash your hands with either:-
- soap and water (if they appear dirty) or apply alcohol gel (if they appear clean) using Steps 1-7.

HOW DO I HAND EXPRESS?
- Position the thumb and 1st two fingers in a ‘C’ shape about 1-2 inches behind the nipple
- Push the thumb and two fingers into the chest wall
- Roll the thumb towards the nipple (like taking a thumbprint), changing pressure from the middle finger to the index finger.
- Aim the nipple into a bowl / container to collect the breast milk
- Repeat the position, push, roll action until the milk duct is empty
- Rotate the thumb and finger position (‘C’ shape) around the breast until the breast is empty

Transfer the breast milk from the bowl into a sterile ‘expressing breast milk’ bottle when you are finished expressing
13) WHEN AND HOW DO I CLEAN AND STERILISE EXPRESSING EQUIPMENT?
All bowl / container (if hand expressing) must be:
- washed in warm soapy water.
then sterilised in either:-
- an electric steam steriliser
- A sterilising unit containing water and a sterilising tablet ‘acticlor’.
This must be done between each expression.
You will receive your own bowl (do not share with others).

14) HOW OFTEN SHOULD I EXPRESS?
You will need to express as often as your baby would need to feed
- **If your baby is a newborn** - express milk 8-10 times in 24 hours. Try to avoid leaving gaps of more than three hours during the day. At night, it is best to express every 5-6 hours. While it is difficult to get up at night, you naturally produce more prolactin (the milk producing hormone) at night so by expressing once overnight it will ensure you have a higher breast milk production during the day also. This will help keep a breast milk supply that satisfies your baby’s needs. The more often you express the more you produce and by emptying your breasts they will make more breast milk.

After a few weeks when you produce about 750 – 900ml per day, you can cut back on the number of times you express per day while also maintaining your milk supply.
- **If your baby is not a newborn**, express at regular intervals or at the same times as your baby would usually breastfeed.
- **If your baby is starting to breastfeed after receiving expressed breast milk for a while**, you may need to continue expressing breast milk until your baby is totally established on breast feeds, this will keep your breast milk supply.

Most two-week-old babies go through a growth spurt and feed frequently for 24-48 hours to increase their mothers’ breast milk supply. Researchers advise mothers expressing breast milk for sick or pre-term infants to express more frequently (hourly for about 8 hours) during this time. This mimics the increased frequency of feeding by breastfeeding babies to increase mother breast milk supply.

We understand that this is time consuming and difficult when you have a baby who is sick but it will increase your breast milk supply to meet your baby’s needs. If you do not have much time it is better to pump for short periods (5-10 minutes) more frequently than to leave long gaps between pumping sessions.

15) HOW DO I INCREASE MY BREAST MILK SUPPLY?
The following tips may help:
- Get plenty of rest.
- Choose a comfortable seat and private place so that you can relax while expressing.
- Do not feel rushed while expressing.
- Make time for meals, snack regularly, have plenty of drinks available.

**Breastfeed more often if necessary (especially for mastitis or blocked ducts).**

In addition to breastfeeding, you may need to hand express or use a breast pump
16) ARE THERE WAYS THAT I CAN ESTABLISH A GOOD BREAST MILK SUPPLY?
In addition to the above points of ‘how often should I breastfeed?’
The following tips may help, such as:  
- having your baby nearby or a photo of your baby,  
- having a baby grow or blanket that has the scent of your baby near you  
- breast and back massage  
- Kangaroo care / Skin-to-Skin Contact (See below)

It can helpful to breastfeed more often.

17) WHAT IS SKIN-TO-SKIN CONTACT / KANGAROO CARE?
Skin-to-skin contact or ‘Kangaroo Care’ means holding and cuddling your baby as much as possible. Your baby will be dressed only in a nappy (if possible) placed on your chest, skin to skin, inside your clothing. This will help stimulate your breasts to make more breast milk. It can also help stimulate your immune system to make more antibodies in your breast milk.

18) MY BREAST MILK SUPPLY HAS REDUCED, WHY?
Your breast milk supply may reduce for many reasons, especially if you are:  
- Stressed  
- Not expressing frequently enough  
- Engorgement  
- Mastitis or blocked ducts  
- Breast pump funnels are too large or small  
- Sick, unwell due to an illness

19) HOW LONG SHOULD I BREASTFEED EACH TIME?
This depends of the method of expressing you chose. Breast milk may take 1-2 minutes to flow when you start expressing.

It is important to empty your breasts as thoroughly as possible as breast milk increases in fat as the expressing time progresses.

20) I AM TAKING MEDICATIONS – WHAT SHOULD I DO?
If a doctor has prescribed medicine for you, let them know that you are providing breast milk for your baby to ensure the medication is suitable. Remember to tell the nurse and doctor caring for your baby if you are taking any medication.
Check with the pharmacist / doctor if you need to take medication (prescription or over the counter medicine) or herbal remedies, when you are breastfeeding / expressing, as some are not recommended for mothers that are breastfeeding / expressing or may decrease your breast milk supply. If you discuss birth control with your doctor, remember to tell him/her that you are breastfeeding / expressing as this may affect the method of birth control they prescribe.

Do not forget to write the medications you are taking on the breast milk label

21) MY NIPPLES ARE SORE. WHY DID THIS HAPPEN AND WHAT SHOULD I DO?
Sore nipples may occur while breastfeeding for the following reasons:-
- The collection funnel of the expressing set may be too small, rubbing off the nipples. Medela have different size funnels on their expressing sets available to suit all size nipples and ensure that you centre the nipple in the collection funnel.
- If the breast pump suction is too high. It is recommended that you increase the suction pressure slowly until it becomes slightly uncomfortable and then decrease it slightly. Always stop the breast pump before removing the collection funnel.
- At the end of pumping, rub a small amount of breast milk around your nipples to prevent them becoming sore
If your nipples become sore, it may be helpful to hand express until the nipple area heals.

22) SHOULD I TRY TO STIMULATE MY BABY’S SUCK WHEN THEY ARE NOT FEEDING FROM THE BREAST?
Yes, this is also called ‘non-nutritive sucking’ and can be encouraged by:
- your little finger (clean) (this is similar to your nipple when elongated with breastfeeding)
- a soother during feeding times
- sucking directly at your breasts when they are ‘empty’ if your baby’s condition allows.
These are good ways of encouraging the sucking experiences in your baby and may also increase your breast milk supply.

23) WHAT SHOULD I STORE THE BREAST MILK IN?
Any sterile airtight container can be used to store breast milk, as long as it can be sealed. If you are expressing breast milk for your baby in CHI at Crumlin, it should be collected and stored in a sterile plastic ‘breast milk bottle’, supplied by CHI at Crumlin. If not, using immediately, store the breast milk in fridge/freezer.

24) MY BABY IS STARTING BACK ON FEEDS, WHICH BREAST MILK WILL THEY RECEIVE?
If your baby has been fasting for a period and is allowed to start back on breast milk but is not well enough to feed directly from the breast, they should receive:
- Fresh / frozen (colostrum) breast milk supplies first, (if available) then
- Fresh breast milk, then
- Frozen breast milk (starting with the oldest frozen breast milk supply in the freezer (but no older than 3 months), and working towards the most recently frozen expressed breast milk supply)
25) **WHY DOES MY BREAST MILK NEED TO BE FORTIFIED?**

Your breast milk is a perfect source of nutrition for your baby. However, when babies are sick, premature or have a poor weight gain, they may have extra nutritional needs. If additions are needed, these will are prescribed by your dietician.

They will be added to breast milk in the form of fortifiers, either:

**Preterm breast milk fortifiers** - available in sachet form
- for preterm or low birth weight infants only
- added at ward / unit level by your baby’s nurse

**Term breastmilk fortifiers** - added in the Formula Room

Breast milk fortifiers can help babies improve growth and can prevent some nutritional deficiencies. Your dietician will discuss with you, the need to start fortifying your breast milk and the length of time it is needed for.

26) **WILL I ALWAYS HAVE TO TUBE FEED MY BABY?**

Not always, it depends on your baby condition; ask the nurse / doctor caring for your baby. The best thing you can do for your baby until he/she can breastfeed at your breast, if this is your intention, is to increase your breast milk supply by adequate pumping. It is easier for your baby to learn to breastfeed when you have a good flow of breast milk.

27) **WHAT DO I DO WITH EXTRA BREAST MILK?**

If you are pumping more breast milk than your baby needs, you can:
- Store it in the freezer, and use it at a later date
- Donate it to a Human Milk Bank

28) **WHAT IS A HUMAN MILK BANK?**

A Human Milk Bank is a service, which collects, screens, processes and dispenses human breast milk donated by nursing mothers. These nursing mothers are not the parents of the receiving infant. The human milk bank that provides donor breast milk for CHI at Crumlin, is called ‘Sperrin Lakeland Human Milk Bank’. This bank is situated in Irvinestown, Co. Fermanagh and is overseen by the United Kingdom (UK) Association of Milk Bank Guidelines and the National Health Service ‘NHS’ in the UK.

For more information about Human Milk Banks, please contact: [http://www.ukamb.org](http://www.ukamb.org)

29) **HOW DO I WEAN CORRECTLY?**

Firstly, congratulations for breastfeeding and/or expressing for as long as you did. Weaning starts when your baby begins to take anything other than breast milk and it is a natural stage of any baby’s development. Despite your reasons for weaning, **gradual planned weaning** will be the easiest on both yourself and your baby.

Gradual planned weaning means stopping one breast feed or time you express per day every 2-3 days. This allows your breast milk supply to decrease slowly, without causing breast fullness or discomfort. It will also give you time to make sure your baby is adjusting well to their change to formula milk.

For further advice about weaning, ask your baby’s nurse.
30) **HOW WILL I LOOK AFTER MYSELF WHILE EXPRESSING?**

It is important that you maintain a healthy diet and lifestyle, for both you and your baby while in hospital.

You should:

- Get enough rest and sleep so that you have energy to care for both your baby and yourself.
- Eat a healthy diet. Eat regular meals.
- Drink to thirst.
- Avoid alcohol. Alcohol does pass into breast milk so ideally keep your drinking within the limits recommended for pregnant women, which is no more than one or two units per week. Extra alcohol of any type will not increase your milk production and may reduce it.
- Avoid smoking. If you smoke cigarettes, your breast milk will contain nicotine and it may slow down your flow of breast milk and/or decrease your breast milk supply. If possible, reduce the amount you smoke and do not smoke immediately before you express breast milk or breastfeed.

31) **RENTING OR BUYING A BREAST PUMP**

There are many types of breast pumps produced. They are available to either buy and/or rent. OLCHC provides hospital grade electric breast pumps for use within the hospital. If you need one at home they are available along with many other types from “Medicare Health and Living”.

Their contact details are:-

**Address:** Glencormack Business Park, Kilmacanogue, Co. Wicklow.
**Phone:** (01) 2014900

If you have or would like to use another type of breast pump while in hospital, follow the manufacturer instruction booklet for direction on its use and ask the nurse caring for your baby for advice and guidance.

You can claim tax relief for the rental or purchase of a breast pump, through the ‘MED 1 Health Expenses’ form, under the section called ‘Expenses incurred on any medical, surgical or nursing appliance’.

For more information contact [www.revenue.ie](http://www.revenue.ie)

If your baby was born prematurely in Ireland, Medicare has kindly agreed to give a 12.5% discount on breast pump rentals. Please quote the ‘Irish Premature Babies’ Organisation with their sales staff when renting your breast pump.

Always remember, if you have been expressing, you can start or restart breastfeeding whenever your baby is able. Please do not hesitate to talk to your nurse.

If you have any concerns or further questions regarding expressing breast milk, please do not hesitate to talk to your nurse.

**REFERENCES**


## List of useful Breastfeeding Literature and Websites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>List of Useful Breastfeeding Literature and Websites</th>
<th>Website Address</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative in Ireland</td>
<td><a href="http://www.babyfriendly.ie">www.babyfriendly.ie</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Promotion Unit</td>
<td><a href="http://www.breastfeeding.ie">www.breastfeeding.ie</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Leche League</td>
<td><a href="http://www.lalecheleague.org">www.lalecheleague.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuidiu</td>
<td><a href="http://www.cuidiu-ict.ie">www.cuidiu-ict.ie</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Irish Premature Babies’ Organisation</td>
<td><a href="http://www.inha.ie">www.inha.ie</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donor Milk Banks</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ukamb.org">www.ukamb.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On line breastfeeding retail supplier</td>
<td><a href="http://www.onceborn.com">www.onceborn.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medela breast pump suppliers</td>
<td><a href="http://www.medicare.ie">www.medicare.ie</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Other Useful Websites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other Useful Websites</th>
<th>Website Address</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central Revenue Information Office</td>
<td><a href="http://www.revenue.ie">www.revenue.ie</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>