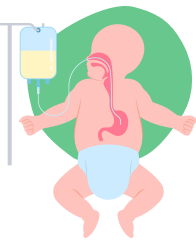


Was your baby born very early?

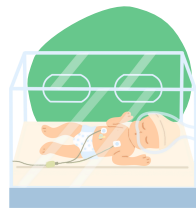
Are you wondering how that might affect your feeding journey?

If your baby was born quite early (before 34 weeks of pregnancy) or extremely early (before 28 weeks of pregnancy):

They are not likely to be able to directly breastfeed (or bottle feed) at first - but they can have your milk through a tube going down into their stomach when they are ready.



They are likely to need help with staying warm, so they are likely to be in an incubator or a warmed cot.



They will have blood sugar and jaundice checks. They might need help with breathing.

A baby born at 31 weeks is usually in hospital for about a month. A baby born at 27 weeks is usually in hospital for about three months.



What about breastmilk?

Colostrum is the first milk your body makes after birth. It comes in small amounts and is full of goodness to protect your baby against infections.

When babies are born early, colostrum and breastmilk are like medicine for them. Each drop can help them.

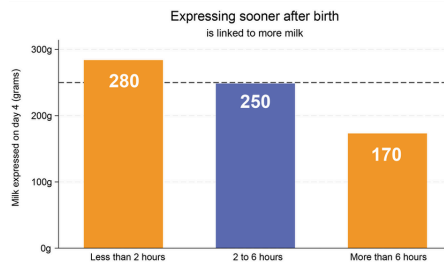


After 2-3 days your milk should 'come in', so there is more of it and it might change colour.

Getting things off to the best start:

Start trying to express milk **within 2-6 hours of giving birth.**

People who express within 6 hours of birth have more milk in the coming days.



video of how to hand express milk:



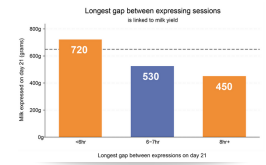
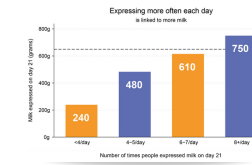
Using a breast pump will also be important - your midwives and nurses will show you how.



What next?

Try to express **eight times a day** or more. Try not to leave gaps of more than **six hours** between sessions, including at night.

Expressing often, and with no long gaps, is linked to getting more milk.



Have as much **'skin to skin'** contact with your baby as you can.

As well as improving expressing and breastfeeding, skin to skin improves babies' brain development.

Get help early: if you are expressing **less than 50ml in 24 hours on day four after birth**, ask for more help from your nurses and midwives.

What about breastfeeding?

Babies will be ready to try breast (or bottle) feeding at different times. This could be as early as 32 weeks' or as late as 42 weeks' (after their due date).



Your nurse will help you look for signs that your baby is ready to start trying.

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OXFORD
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Academic papers on milk expression:

