

Will your baby need surgery in the days or weeks after birth?

Are you wondering how that might affect your feeding journey?

Some babies need surgery soon after birth. Or if they need to wait for an operation, they can't have any milk until the surgery

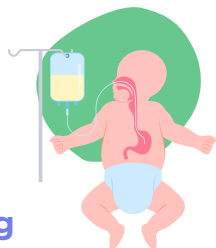
If you want to breastfeed your baby, this means you will need to establish your milk supply by getting milk out of the breasts using your hands and a breast pump.

This is called "expressing". The next page gives information about how to do this.

Some people have to express milk for a short time (a few days) before the baby can start to breastfeed.

Others have to express milk for a long time (weeks or months), either because the baby can't have milk for a long time or because the milk needs to be given into a tube into the stomach.

Ask your doctors about when your baby might be able to start having milk and when they might be able to start breastfeeding



Start expressing as soon as you can after birth

Colostrum is the first milk your body makes after birth. It comes in **small amounts**.

Even if your baby can't have milk, they might be able to have some colostrum on the lips, for "mouth care". Ask your nurse about this.

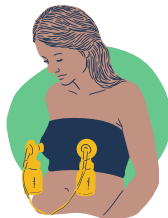
Start trying to express milk **within 2-6 hours** of giving birth.

People who express within 6 hours of birth have more milk in the coming days than those who don't.



Then try to express **eight times a day** or more. Expressing less than six times a day is unlikely to give you a full milk supply.

Try not to leave **gaps of more than six hours** between expressing sessions, including at night.



Expressing can be done with your hands or a pump.

Your midwife will show you what to do.

You can watch a video of how to hand express milk:



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

What next?

Even if your baby can't have any milk for some time, it's a good idea to continue **expressing frequently**.

This is because your body might not fully develop its milk-making ability if you express small amounts in the first weeks after birth.

It is difficult to say **how much milk** to target if your baby can't breastfeed.

Some studies suggest that if you want to give your baby only your breastmilk for a long time, then these are good volumes to aim for:

- 250ml each day by day 4
- 500ml each day by day 14
- 650ml each day by day 21

Ask for help from your midwives and nurses if this is difficult.

Some people find it hard to express a lot of milk. This is not your fault and doesn't mean that you won't be able to breastfeed.

If your baby is well enough, have as much **'skin to skin' contact** with them as you can. This can boost your milk supply.

What about breastfeeding?

Your nurse will help you to breastfeed directly when your baby is ready. Some find this easy and some take a bit longer.



This research was funded by the NIHR (Fellowship 300895). The views expressed are those of the author(s) and not necessarily those of the NIHR, NHS or UK Department of Health and Social Care

FUNDED BY
NIHR National Institute for Health and Care Research

OXFORD
POPULATION
HEALTH
NPEU

Academic papers on milk expression:

