

Was your baby born very early? (before 34 weeks of pregnancy)

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. They can get your milk in a tube going down into their stomach when they are ready

They are likely to need help with staying warm. 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

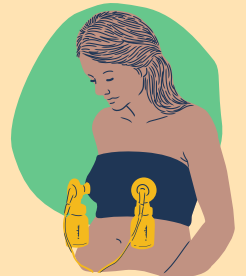
When babies are born early, colostrum and breastmilk are like medicine for them. Each drop can help them

After 2-3 days your milk should 'come in', so there is more of it and it may 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 tend to have more milk in the coming days than those who don't, and may be able to express less often
- Try to express **eight times** a day or more, with no gaps of more than **six hours** between sessions, including at night.
- Expressing often is linked to getting more milk. Few people who express less than six times a day get enough milk to feed their babies for the long term
- Have as much 'skin to skin' contact with your baby as you can
- Get help early: if you are expressing less than 50ml on day four after birth, ask for more help from your nurses and midwives



Watch a video on how to express:

