

## Your Milk is Medicine for Your Baby

Mother's own milk is considered the best nutrition for infants, especially those in the special care units. Although special baby formulas have been made for infants, only mother's milk works like a medicine to help protect infants from many of the complications during and after their hospital stay.

### HOW DOES MY MILK HELP MY BABY?

Scientists are beginning to understand more about how mother's milk helps lower the risk of complications for NICU babies. Here are some of the ways your milk helps your baby:

#### Germ-fighting

- Antibodies are special substances (cells) in mother's milk that coat the inside of your baby's intestines. This protective coating – much like a rust-proof paint – acts by sealing off the tiny openings in the baby's intestines so that germs cannot enter and go into the bloodstream.
- Some cells in the milk actually kill germs, while other cells make it hard for germs to grow.
- Another group of cells act as decoys by "tricking" germs and causing them to stick to these decoy cells for a ride all the way through the intestines. By taking them for a ride, these decoy cells prevent the germs from causing infection.

#### Reducing inflammation

- In addition to protecting babies from infection, mother's milk also stops or slows down the inflammation process.
- Inflammation is an area of soreness or scarring that causes complications in the preterm infant. Mother's milk contains powerful substances that help the growth of good germs in the baby's intestines.

#### Brain and eye development

- Babies get almost half of their nutrition from the fat in mother's milk. It provides calories and a special mixture of fats to help develop the baby's brain and eye tissues.
- Although some baby formulas are changing the fats in their milk to match those in breast milk, they can never be made exactly the same way as those found in breast milk.



#### QUESTIONS?

**LACTATION/MILK BANK SERVICES - 832-824-6120**

**(8A.M. - 5 P.M. DAILY)**

**[TEXASCHILDRENS.ORG/BREASTFEEDING](https://www.texaschildrens.org/breastfeeding)**



## Providing and Feeding Your Breast Milk

The breast stimulation you get – by hand expression and with a breast pump – is very important during the first few days after you deliver your baby. The first week following delivery is a very important time for building a good milk supply. The hormones in your body that are released during this time stimulate the production of breast milk. Even though you are separated from your baby, you can increase the levels of these hormones – and your milk flow – by doing the following:

### HOW SOON SHOULD I START PUMPING/EXPRESSING MY MILK?

- Start pumping within **one hour** after delivery and no later than **six hours** results in better milk production.
- Your nurse can show you how to hand express your colostrum – the “first milk” – within the first few hours after birth.

### HOW OFTEN SHOULD I EXPRESS MY MILK?

- Pump every **two to three** hours (8 to 10 times) in a 24 hour period for the first 2 weeks, even during the night
- Once you build you milk supply, you may be able to pump less often.

### HOW MUCH MILK SHOULD I EXPECT TO MAKE?

- You will express only drops of colostrum in the first few days. This milk will be given to your baby.
- At the end of the first week after delivery, you should be expressing about 3 cups (24 ounces) of milk a day.
- At the end of the second week, you should be making about 4 cups (32 ounces) of milk a day

### HOW CAN I BE SURE MY BABY WILL RECEIVE MY COLOSTRUM/BREAST MILK?

#### What Do I DO?

The hospital staff is committed to making sure your colostrum/breast milk is fed to your baby. To make sure that your baby receives your colostrum/breast milk we need your help by taking these steps:

- Collect all your colostrum/breast milk, no matter how small the amount
- Label milk containers with your baby’s name, medical record number, date and time milk was expressed.
- Take your milk to the Milk Bank within 24 hours of expression between the hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. every day, including weekends. For after-hours milk delivery, contact your baby’s nurse for instructions.

#### What Does the Milk Bank Do?

The Milk Bank staff is specially trained to care for your milk like a medicine. Here are some of the special ways we care for your milk:

- **Store** your milk at the right temperature to protect the special substances in your milk.
- **Prepare** your milk for your baby. The Milk Bank staff is trained to use the proper equipment and procedures to handle your milk before it is delivered to your baby for feeding. If the doctor has ordered extra calories or other nutrients, the staff will add these to your milk. They will prepare each individual feeding and label the container with your baby’s name and medical record number, extra calories (if added) and the date and time the milk was prepared.
- **Test** the calories in your milk. For some babies, especially those who weigh less than a pound and a half, your baby’s doctor may want to know the calories so they can decide the extra calories that need to be added.
- **Deliver** prepared feedings to your baby’s bedside each day.