

# UNICEF UK BABY FRIENDLY INITIATIVE

## EXPRESSION ASSESSMENT: STAFF INFORMATION



The importance of breastmilk for sick and preterm babies cannot be overestimated. It contributes uniquely to infant wellbeing and development by supporting growth, protecting against infection, and decreasing the incidence and severity of disease. However, it is important to recognise that long-term breastmilk expression can be demanding. Effective support is therefore necessary.

### Tips to support mothers to achieve their goals:

- Review expression **at least once within the first 12 hours following delivery**. Reviews should also take place **at least four times within the first two weeks** to provide regular opportunities to discuss and address concerns. The Baby Friendly assessment tool can be used to ensure consistency in approach and support: [unicef.uk/expressionchecklist](https://www.unicef.uk/expressionchecklist)
- Early, frequent and effective expressing (combining hand and pump) is crucial to maximise milk production and maintain supply for as long as the mother wishes. Expression should begin within the first two hours after birth and take place **at least 8-10 times in 24 hours, including at least once at night**.
- Support should be provided to **avoid long gaps between expressions**.
- Many mothers will be able to express between 700-900 mls per day by 10-14 days, however several factors can impact on production. The aim should therefore be to support mothers to **achieve their potential** rather than focusing on specific amounts.
- A delay in starting to express or a reduction in frequency or effectiveness can compromise long-term supply. **Early detection and support** will help mothers to maintain confidence in their ability to produce milk for their baby.
- **Hand expressing** is useful for obtaining small volumes of colostrum and can be combined with **pump expressing** soon after birth if desired.
- Breast massage, expressing close to baby, relaxation techniques, and prolonged skin-to-skin will **increase oxytocin and milk flow**.
- **Cluster expressing** (expressing 2-3 times in a short period) can help to increase the frequency of expressing and enable mothers to fit expressing around other commitments.
- Staff should ensure **pumping equipment** fits effectively and should support mothers to know how to use equipment correctly.
- **Double pumping** should be encouraged as this can save time, produce larger volumes, and may contribute to long-term expression.
- It is expected that milk volumes would increase in the first two weeks, however **frequent evaluation by staff is crucial** to support mothers to achieve their goals. Developing an expressing plan with mothers can be useful. An expressing log can be used to monitor frequency and amounts: [unicef.uk/expressinglog](https://www.unicef.uk/expressinglog)
- **Referral to specialist support** should be considered if the mother is expressing effectively but the amounts are not increasing as hoped.
- **Emotional support is important**. This should include enabling mothers to stay with their baby as often and for as long as they wish, frequent updates on the condition of the baby, and participation in as much care as they feel comfortable with.