

Oral Immune Therapy... EVERY DROP COUNTS

What is Oral Immune Therapy?

Oral immune therapy (OIT) is small amounts of your breast milk, which provides benefits and immunity to your preterm or ill baby in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. It can act like medicine for babies who are separated from their mothers and are not yet able to breast feed.

How is it given?

One drop of your own fresh colostrum – and later breast milk – is placed between the cheek and gum with a syringe. It is given every 2- 4 hours until your baby is able to feed by mouth.

Your milk provides immune protection to your premature or sick baby

What is Colostrum?

Colostrum is the milk produced the first few days after birth. It is yellowish orange in color, thick and sticky. It is rich in vital nutrients, but also contains many substances to help grow your baby's immune system.

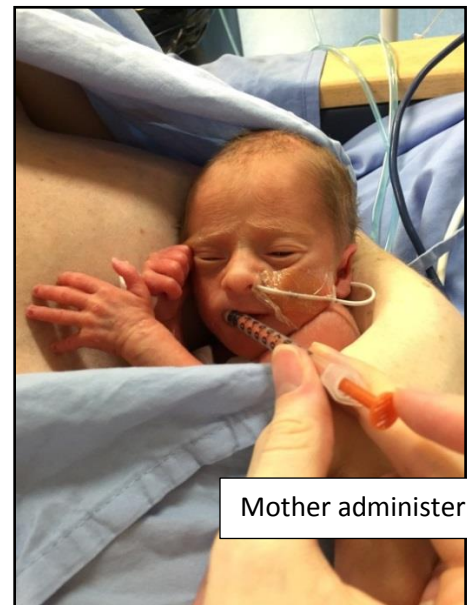
What are the benefits of OIT?

- ♥ Provides immune protection
- ♥ Lowers infections and inflammation
- ♥ Babies are able to start normal feeds sooner
- ♥ Supports better weight gain
- ♥ Helps breast milk production

How to hand express colostrum during the first 24 hours

How can I get started?

- Start hand expression within the first hour after birth – or as soon as possible.
- The first dose of OIT will be given as soon as it is available.
- Ask your nurse for supplies.
- Early hand expression helps you to make more milk.



Mother administering OIT

What supplies do I need?

- 1 small feeding syringe supplied in the OIT kit.
- Have the syringe ready to collect the expressed drops.
- The nurse will label it with your name, baby's sex, date and time of expression and a green dot to identify it as colostrum.

How do I hand express?

- Wash your hands.
- Massage your breast briefly. Cup your breast with one hand.



- Place your thumb and first finger at the edge of the areola.



- Gently push your fingers back towards your chest, and then squeeze them together while you move them towards the nipple.



- Move your fingers around the areola in a circle to express from different parts of your breast.



- Use the syringe (or a spoon) to collect your colostrum.

- Draw the expressed colostrum into the small 1 ml feeding syringe.
- Hand expression takes practice. The first few attempts you may only be able to express a few drops, or none at all, but do not worry as this is normal.
- If you are expressing at your baby's bedside, you can give your baby a drop of colostrum on your clean finger. Ask your baby's nurse to show you how.



How often should I hand express?

It is important to continue to hand express every 2-3 hours to stimulate your breasts to make more colostrum. After 24 hours you will start mixing hand expression with pumping.

As you make more volume there are special clean 'snappie' containers with lids to use for storage

Important Resources

Ask your baby's nurse for the following information booklets and video link:

- ♥ **Feeding Your Baby: What you need to know** explains the pathway and stages you and your baby will follow as your baby moves from intravenous feeds and/or tube feeds to breast and/or bottle. OIT is a key part of Stage One.
- ♥ **The NICU Family Handbook** has a section for breastfeeding which covers all of the basic tips on how to provide breast milk to your baby, as well as hand expression, pumping, safe storage and transport.
- ♥ **[BC Women's Hospital website](#)** ([Health Information - Feeding Your Baby - Resources](#)) for a good video on hand expression.