

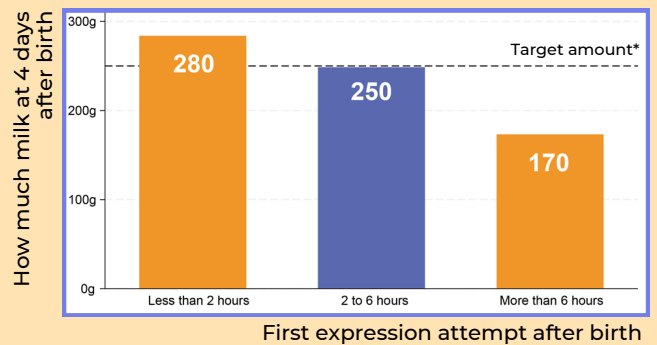
How soon after birth should we support families to express colostrum?

When their baby is sick or was born early, and can't breastfeed yet



Does it matter when parents first try to express colostrum?

In several research studies, expressing sooner after birth was linked to being able to express more milk in the days and weeks after birth



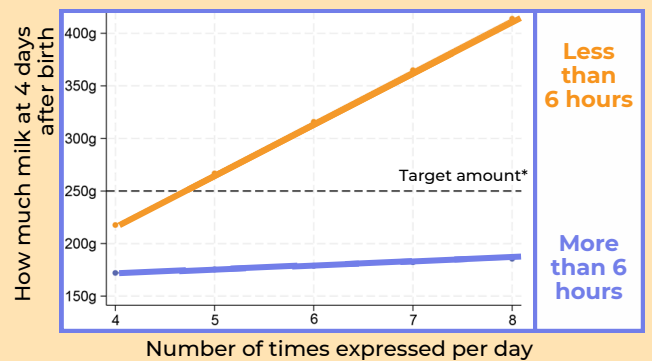
In our study, people who expressed within six hours of birth could express about 90ml more milk per day, four days after birth

By three weeks after birth, there was no difference in the amount of milk



People who expressed within six hours of giving birth got more milk each time that they expressed, on average

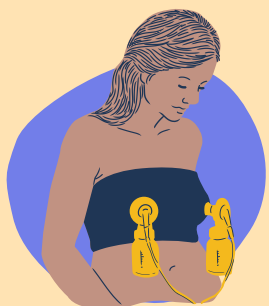
We could see this effect at four days and at three weeks after birth:



This is important because:

Expressing milk can be hard when babies are sick or born very early. Many parents are worried about their milk supply

Expressing frequently is difficult and competes with parents' sleep and self-care



What should we tell parents?

Expressing within 6 hours of birth is likely to kick start milk supply and reduce the burden of expressing later on

Expressing within 2 hours may have extra benefit. The Baby Friendly Initiative recommends supporting families with expressing within 2 hours of birth if baby can't breastfeed.

Parents should keep expressing every few hours once they have started

*The target amount of milk was set because it is linked to a high chance of later exclusive breastmilk feeding. The full research results can be found here: <https://fn.bmj.com/content/early/2024/03/04/archdischild-2023-326784>