

## You're Expecting a New Baby – Congratulations!

Expecting a baby earlier than you planned can be scary. All of your baby's healthcare team members will be working hard to keep your baby healthy and safe, but there are things you can do too!

One of the most important things you can do is to pump milk for your baby. You may not be able to breastfeed right away, but you can make milk as soon as your baby is born. Your milk helps protect and nurture your baby's premature body like nothing else can!



### Questions to Ask

- When can my baby start getting my milk?
- What can I do if I'm having trouble with my milk supply?
- When can I start non-nutritive breastfeeding?

Photo credit: Josh, Nicole and William Nyberg

last reviewed April, 2018©



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA  
COLLEGE OF NURSING  
**NEC-Zero**

### My Pumping Goals:

I will start pumping or hand-expressing within the first:

- 2 hours (best!)
- 6 hours
- \_\_\_\_\_

I will try to provide milk for:

- 1 month (most important!)
- 2 months
- 3 months
- 12 months
- \_\_\_\_\_

### Recommended App

**Peekaboo ICU Preemie Baby**

### Support

**NEC Society**

[necsociety.org/resources](http://necsociety.org/resources)

**Hand to Hold**

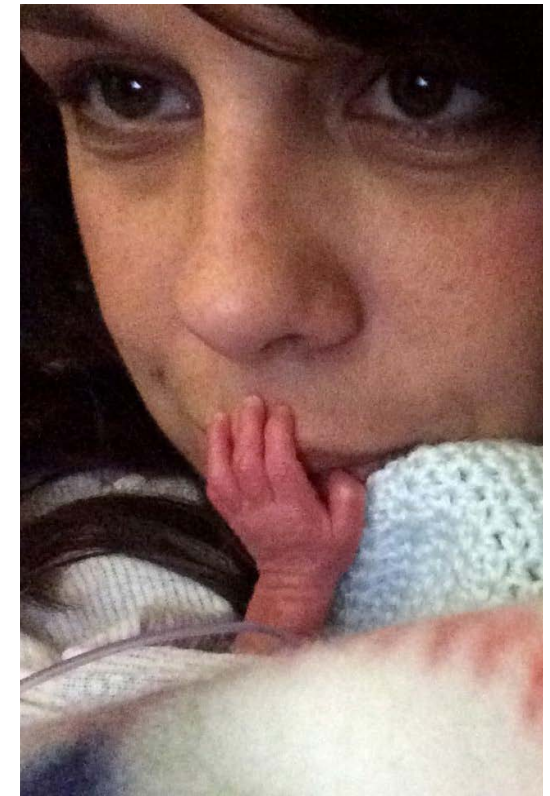
[handtohold.org](http://handtohold.org)

**The Morgan Leary Vaughan Fund**

[morgansfund.org](http://morgansfund.org)

NEC-Zero is a team delivered intervention with a goal to prevent and improve early diagnosis of NEC.

For more information visit  
[neczero.nursing.arizona.edu](http://neczero.nursing.arizona.edu)



## Expecting a Preemie?

How the Gift  
of Your Milk Protects  
Your New Baby



## How Does My Milk Help My Baby?

### Belly

- Premature babies can get a disease of the intestines called necrotizing enterocolitis – often called NEC (said like “neck”)
- Though rare, NEC can make your baby very sick; some babies need surgery, and some babies die
- Some babies are at higher risk for getting NEC – ask your baby’s doctor how to prevent and watch for NEC
- Your milk is like medicine to help prevent NEC - the more of mom’s milk a baby gets, the lower their risk for getting NEC!

### Immune System

- Preemies have very immature immune systems, and can get infections easily
- There is no medicine to help strengthen your baby’s immune system...but your milk does!
- Things that help your own body fight infections pass through your milk to your baby



## Can I Breastfeed My Preemie?

If possible, yes! But there are very few preemies who go home exclusively breastfed for the following reasons:

- Most babies can’t take food by bottle or breast until they reach 34 weeks - they may struggle to coordinate sucking, swallowing, and breathing
- Premature babies need extra calories and nutrients to support their growth, so powders or liquids called fortifiers will be added to milk you pump



## What If I’m Not Planning on Breastfeeding or Pumping Milk?

This is a personal decision, but because your milk helps protect your baby against dangers that preemies face, it is best to try to provide milk for your baby’s first month. What can you commit to? Make a reasonable goal for yourself (see back) and do your best – even small amounts can benefit your baby.

## What If My Baby Can’t Get My Milk?

Some premature babies can’t be fed right away, and some may have difficulty digesting and have to stop feedings for a few days. If your baby’s doctor determines that they cannot have your milk at the moment, don’t let that stop you!

Keep pumping and try not to be discouraged – your milk can be frozen for many months after you pump and can wait until your baby is ready.

## What If I Can’t Produce Milk?

Some moms simply can’t produce their own milk due to prior surgery on the breast, hormone problems, medications that support their own health, and many other reasons. If this applies to you, don’t worry – you have so many other ways to support your baby’s health.

Many NICUs use donated milk from other moms that has been specially cleaned and treated so babies can receive some benefits of human milk.

