

STORING EXPRESSED BREAST MILK

These guidelines are to be used for healthy babies who were born at term.

If your baby is in the hospital, check with your hospital for expressing/storing breast milk* guidelines.

TYPES OF STORAGE CONTAINERS

- Glass or BPA-free hard plastic
- BPA-free, breast milk freezer storage bags

HOW TO CLEAN STORAGE CONTAINERS

- Rinse containers with cool water to remove milk residue. Then wash the containers in a clean basin with warm, soapy water and rinse well with warm water. Containers may be washed in a dishwasher if marked “dishwasher safe”
- Let the containers air dry. Containers can also be dried with a clean paper towel
- If breast milk freezer bags are being used, they are ready to use. They are for one time use only and cannot be re-used

WHEN STORING BREAST MILK

- Write the date and the time expressed on the container
- Limit throwing away unused milk by storing it in small (2-4 oz) portions
- If combining breast milk for storage, cool freshly expressed breast milk in the fridge before adding it to already cooled milk
- Leave 0.5-1 inch of space at the top of the container when freezing as milk will expand

USING STORED BREAST MILK

- Whenever possible, offer freshly expressed breast milk
- When using milk that has been stored in the fridge or freezer, use the oldest breast milk first
- Most babies will drink milk at any temperature: cool, warm or at room temperature. Your baby may have a preference, but all options are safe

THAWING BREAST MILK

OPTIONS TO THAW

- Thaw frozen breast milk in the refrigerator overnight or by placing the container under warm running water or in a bowl of warm water
- Do not thaw at room temperature

OPTIONS TO WARM BASED ON PREFERENCE

- Warm breast milk by placing container in a bowl of warm (not hot) water
- Do not heat on the stove or in the microwave as this may create hot spots or damage the nutrients in the milk
- You can also use a waterless warmer

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BEFORE USING

- Swirl container to re-mix the fat into the breast milk
- Test the temperature before using it. It should not be hot

AFTER USING

- Once baby begins drinking the expressed breast milk, leftovers cannot be put back in the refrigerator, refrozen or re-fed to the baby if not finished within 2 hours

BREAST MILK STORAGE GUIDELINES

FRESHLY EXPRESSED BREAST MILK				
Location	°C	°F	Duration	Comments
Countertop, table	Room temperature up to 25°C	Room temperature up to 77°F	Up to or less than ($\leq$) 6 hours	Refrigerate breast milk right after expression if not being used immediately
Insulated cooler bag	-15°C to 4°C	5°F to 39°F	24 hours	Always keep ice packs in contact with milk containers, limit opening cooler bag
Refrigerator	4°C	40°F	5 days	Store milk in the back of the main body of the refrigerator. Place breast milk in freezer immediately after expression if not being used within 5 days

FRESHLY EXPRESSED OR REFRIGERATED BREAST MILK				
Location	°C	°F	Duration	Comments
Freezer section of a refrigerator (e.g. single-door mini fridge)	-15°C	5°F	2 weeks	Store milk toward the back of the freezer where temperature is most constant
Freezer section of refrigerator with separate doors	-18°C or colder	0°F or colder	$\leq$ 6 months	
Chest or upright deep freezer	-20°C or colder	-4°F or colder	$\leq$ 12 months	

THAWED, PREVIOUSLY FROZEN BREAST MILK				
Location	°C	°F	Duration	Comments
Countertop, table	Room temperature up to 25°C	Room temperature up to 77°F	$\leq$ 2 hours	Do not re-freeze thawed breast milk
Refrigerator	4°C	39°F	24 hours	Use breast milk within 24 hours of being completely thawed

*Note: The terms breast milk/breastfed/breastfeeding are widely used, but human milk/chestfed/chestfeeding can be used interchangeably. The terms are meant to be inclusive of all parents, caregivers and significant others.

References: Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine (2017) Clinical Protocol Number #8: Human Milk Storage Information for Home Use for Healthy Full-Term Infants, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Proper Storage and Preparation of Breast Milk (January 2022), Breastfeeding Protocol (2019) Expressing, Collecting, and Storing Human Milk