

Storing Expressed BREASTMILK

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 guidelines on expressing and storing breastmilk.

Types of storage containers:

- Glass or hard plastic containers, Bisphenol A (BPA) free with a tight lid is preferred
- BPA-free breastmilk freezer storage bags may be used
- Plastic bags should be sturdy, sealed well, and stored in an area where they are not likely to be punctured
- If you are unsure whether your plastic bottles or containers contain BPA, please contact the manufacturer

How to clean the storage container:

- Wash the containers in hot soapy water and rinse well with hot water. Containers may be washed in a dishwasher if marked "dishwasher safe"
- Let the containers air dry
- If breastmilk freezer bags are being used, they are sterile and ready to use. They are for one time use only and cannot be re-used

When storing breastmilk:

- 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 breastmilk for storage, cool freshly expressed breastmilk in the fridge before adding it to already cooled milk
- Leave space at the top of the container when freezing as milk will expand

Using stored breastmilk:

- Use the oldest breastmilk first
- If baby is not feeding directly from the breast and is being fed expressed breast milk only, attempt to give freshly expressed breastmilk as often as possible
- Most babies will drink milk cool, at room temperature or warmed. Your baby may have a preference

Thawing breastmilk:

Options to Thaw:

- Thaw frozen breastmilk 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:

- Warm breastmilk 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

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Before using:

- Swirl container to re-mix the fat into the breastmilk
- Test the temperature before using it. It may be warm but not hot
- Thawed breastmilk may taste or smell different from fresh, but it is still good
- Discard thawed breastmilk that has been at room temperature for any more than 2 hours

After using:

- Once baby begins drinking the expressed breastmilk, leftovers cannot be put back in the refrigerator or refrozen
- Once baby begins a feed, leftovers should be thrown away after 2 hours

Breastmilk storage guidelines

FRESHLY EXPRESSED BREASTMILK				
Location	°C	°F	Duration	Comments
Countertop, table	Room temperature up to 25°C	Room temperature up to 77°F	6 to 8 hours	Containers should be covered and kept as cool as possible. Covering with a cool towel may help keep milk cooler.
Insulated cooler bag	-15°C to 4°C	5°F to 39°F	24 hours	Keep ice packs in contact with milk containers at all times, limit opening cooler bag
Refrigerator	4°C	39°F	5 days	Store milk in the back of the main body of the refrigerator

FRESHLY EXPRESSED OR REFRIGERATED BREASTMILK				
Location	°C	°F	Duration	Comments
Freezer compartment of a refrigerator	-15°C	5°F	2 weeks	Store milk toward the back of the freezer where temperature is most constant.
Freezer compartment of refrigerator with separate doors	-18°C	0°F	3 to 6 months	
Chest or upright deep freezer	-20°C	-4°F	6 to 12 months	

THAWED, NOT WARMED BREASTMILK				
Location	°C	°F	Duration	Comments
Countertop, table	Room temperature up to 25°C	Room temperature up to 77°F	2 hours	Should not be warmed and then re-stored in the refrigerator. Do not re-freeze thawed breastmilk.
Refrigerator	4°C	39°F	24 hours	

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 Handling & Storage of Human Milk, 2010