

Storing Breastmilk

The best way to feed your baby is at your breast. If you and your baby are unable to breastfeed for medical or other reasons, you may choose to hand express or pump your breastmilk to store and give to your baby. These guidelines help prevent waste and spoilage.

Collect Equipment

- Use glass bottles or Bisphenol A (BPA) free plastic containers with tight lids.
- Special breastmilk freezer bags can also be used.
- Do not use bottle liner bags. These are thinner plastic bags which can tear with freezing.

Storage Guidelines

- Store in 2 to 4 ounce portions to prevent wasting milk.
- Always cool freshly expressed milk before adding it to already cooled or frozen milk.
- Always add a smaller amount of cooled milk to frozen milk.
- Leave a 1-inch space at the top of the container when freezing.
- Do not refreeze breastmilk once it is thawed.
- Place containers at the back of the fridge or freezer where it is the coldest.
- Label the container with the date the breastmilk was expressed. After the storage time has passed, discard the milk.

These guidelines apply to mothers who have a healthy, full-term baby and are storing their milk for home use:

Location	Temperature	Duration	Comments
Countertop, table	Room temperature up to 77°F	6 to 8 hours	Cover container and keep as cool as possible.
Insulated cooler bag	5 to 39°F	24 hours	Limit opening cooler bag and keep ice packs in contact with milk containers.
Refrigerator	39°F	5 days	Store milk in the back of refrigerator.
Freezers			
Freezer compartment of refrigerator	5°F	2 weeks	Store milk in back of freezer to keep a constant temperature.
Freezer compartment of refrigerator with separate doors	0°F	3 to 6 months	
Chest or upright deep freezer	-4°F	6 to 12 months	

Reference: Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine. Princeton Junction, New Jersey: Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine.

You may find that depending on what study or resource book you read, these storage tips may vary. Please ask your lactation consultant and healthcare provider for the best guidelines and recommendations for your baby.

Cleaning of Equipment

For healthy, full-term babies receiving breastmilk, wash containers in hot soapy water and rinse well with hot water. Let the containers air dry. It is unnecessary to sterilize items.

If your baby is premature (born too early) or is in the hospital, speak to a healthcare provider who has breastfeeding expertise about cleaning containers to store breastmilk.

Thawing Frozen Breast Milk

- Check the date on the stored breastmilk. Use the container with the earliest date.
- Thaw frozen breastmilk by leaving it in the fridge for 4 hours.
- OR...place container under cool running water. Once it has begun to thaw, run warm water to finish thawing.
- Warm breastmilk by placing container in a bowl of very warm water.
- Never thaw at room temperature.
- DO NOT heat on stove or in microwave oven.

