

Storage and handling of breastmilk

Working mothers or others who are pumping breastmilk for their infants should store the milk in the cleanest and safest way. It can be stored in any clean container: plastic, glass or nurser bags. Recommendations for storage temperatures and times vary greatly from one authority to another. We are recommending guidelines based on research and common sense.

Room Temperature

Freshly pumped breastmilk can be kept at room temperature for 8 hours after pumping. If it will need to be kept longer, please refrigerate. Milk that has been previously chilled should be kept at room temperature for no longer than an hour or so.

Refrigerated

Breastmilk may be stored in a refrigerator three to five days. If you think that you may not use it within that time period, freeze it.

You may add "new" breastmilk to breastmilk that has been refrigerated. Chill the "new" milk before adding to already chilled milk. The milk must be discarded if it is older than the expiration date of the original milk.

If you find you have milk that has almost reached its expiration date in the refrigerator, you may freeze it for later use.

Frozen



Breastmilk may be stored in a freezer for up to 6 months and in a deep freeze for up to 12 months. The freezer is cold enough if it keeps your ice cream solid. That will be about 0° F or -20° C. It should be placed in a part of the freezer that will not be subject to changes in temperature as the door is opened and closed. If plastic nurser bags are used, they should be doubled or protected from being bumped and torn in the freezer.

You may add "new" milk to previously frozen milk. Chill the "new" milk prior to adding it to a frozen container of milk. The expiration date of that container of milk will be from the date of the original milk.

It is best to freeze milk in feeding sized quantities. If you are just starting to pump, you may not yet have an idea of what will be the right size for your baby. Freeze in 2-3 oz quantities to start. You don't want to thaw out more milk than your baby will take in 24 hours. You can always get more if necessary, but you will be dismayed if you have to discard pumped breastmilk. After you have some experience with how much your baby takes from a bottle, you can freeze milk in that quantity.

Thawed

Breastmilk can be thawed in a bowl of lukewarm water in just a few minutes or held under lukewarm running water. Then it can be warmed to serving temperature in the same manner. Never make it warmer than



body temperature. Never use a microwave to thaw or warm breastmilk. Any milk left in a bottle after a feeding must be discarded. Thawed breastmilk must be discarded after 24 hours. Do not re-freeze it.

Transporting

If you are pumping breastmilk at work, you should chill it either in a refrigerator or a portable cooler bag. A cooler bag can be used to transport it home. Studies have shown that freshly pumped breastmilk keeps well at room temperature for several hours (some studies say up to 8 hours) so if chilling your breastmilk is difficult, it can be stored at room temperature for several hours, and then refrigerated as soon as possible.

BPA

In light of the recent controversy about BPA contamination of breastmilk leaching from certain kinds of plastic, breastmilk should be stored in glass, polyethelyne (cloudy type of rigid plastic) or polypropolene (specially designed mother's milk storage bags) containers rather than polycarbonate containers.

Please be aware that the information provided is intended solely for general educational and informational purposes only. It is neither intended nor implied to be a substitute for professional medical advice. Always seek the advice of your physician for any questions you may have regarding your or your infant's medical condition. Never disregard professional medical advice or delay in seeking it because of something you have received in this information.

