



Collecting and Storing Breastmilk

These guidelines apply to collecting and storing breastmilk for home use for healthy, full-term babies. For other situations, such as a premature baby or milk for hospital use, please see your health care provider.

Handling breastmilk:

- Wash hands before expressing or handling breastmilk.

Collecting breastmilk:

- Collect milk in clean bottles or bags strong enough to hold milk.
- Fill bottles or bags in the portion size needed for feedings. (2 or 3 ounces per bottle usually works well.)
- Leave space at the top for expansion of the liquid if freezing.
- Date all bottles and bags. Use milk with the oldest date first.
- Clean your breastpump after each use.

Storing breastmilk:

At work:

- Store milk in your own cooler with ice/ice gel pack or in the company refrigerator.

At home:

- Milk may be stored in the refrigerator up to 3 days, at a temperature less than 40 F.
- Milk may be stored in the freezer up to 3-4 months, at a temperature less than 32 F.
- Milk may be stored in a deep freezer for 6 months or longer at a temperature less than 0 F.
- Store milk in the back of the refrigerator and freezer where the temperature is lower. Do NOT store milk in the door of the refrigerator or freezer.



Thawing and warming breastmilk:

- Thaw or warm the amount of breastmilk that is needed for a feeding.
- Thaw frozen breastmilk by putting it in the refrigerator the night before use.
- If frozen milk is not thawed in the refrigerator set the container in a pan or bowl of cool water.
- To warm milk, run warm water from the tap over the bottle or bag or set it in a pan or bowl of warm water. Do NOT boil or microwave breastmilk.
- Gently rotate the container to mix before feeding it to your baby. This helps mix the fat and water layers that separate when stored.
- Use the milk right away after thawing and warming.
The milk should be used:
 - Within 24 hours if refrigerated and
 - Within 1 hour if at room temperature.
- Discard any breastmilk left in your baby's bottle after feeding. Bacteria in your baby's saliva can spoil milk and make it unsafe to drink.



Adapted with permission from the Texas Department of Health.



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