

Storage of Human Milk for Full-term Infants

Preserving your investment



Beware Of Microwaves

Never put a bottle or bag of breast milk in the microwave. Microwaving creates hot spots that could burn your baby and damage components of the milk.

Storage of breast milk

Begin by washing hands with soap and water for 15 seconds. If hands are not visibly dirty, an alcohol based hand rub containing 60-95% alcohol may be used. Use clean containers. Breast milk can be stored in glass or hard BPA-free plastic bottles with tight fitting lids, or milk storage bags, which are sterile and made for freezing human milk. Do not use disposable bottle liners to store breast milk.

After expressing

Human milk can look clear, bluish, yellowish, or brownish. It is best to refrigerate or chill milk right after it is expressed. Label the date on the storage container, and always use the oldest dated milk first.

Stored breast milk tends to separate in its container into two parts – the cream which rises to the top and then lighter colored milk below. At the time the milk is to be used gently swirl the container to mix the cream back into the rest of the milk. Shaking the milk is not recommended as it can cause a breakdown of some of the milk's valuable components.

When freezing milk

Wait to tighten bottle caps or lids until the milk is completely frozen.

Try to leave an inch or so from the milk to the top of the container be-

cause it will expand when freezing.

Freeze the milk in small amounts, such as 2 to 4 ounce servings, to reduce waste if the baby does not finish all of it.

Fresh milk should be cooled in the refrigerator before adding it to milk that has been frozen.

Thawing and warming milk

- Refrigerated breast milk does not necessarily need to be warmed. Some moms prefer to take the chill off and serve at room temperature. Some moms serve it cold.
- If you want to warm the milk, never put a bottle or bag of breast milk in the microwave. Microwaving creates hot spots that could burn your baby and damage the components of the milk.
- Hold the bottle or frozen bag of milk under cool and then warm water for a few minutes until it thaws and warms to a comfortable temperature.
- You also can allow frozen milk to thaw to room temperature on a counter or other clean surface.
- Or, heat a pan of water on the stove, remove from the heat and place the container into the warm water. Swirl the milk and test the temperature by dropping some on your wrist. It should be comfortably warm.



Milk Storage^{1,2,3}

Place	Temperature	How Long	Things to Know
Countertop, table	Room temp (60-85° F)	4-6 hours	Containers should be covered and kept as cool as possible; covering the container with a cool towel may keep milk cooler.
Insulated cooler bag	5° - 39° F	24 hours	Keep frozen gel ice packs in contact with milk containers at all times; limit opening cooler bag.
Refrigerator	<39° F	72 hours optimal; 5-8 days acceptable	Store milk in the back of the main body of the refrigerator under very clean conditions.
Freezer compartment of refrigerator with separate doors	0° F	3-6 months	Store milk toward the back of the freezer where the temperature is most constant. Milk stored longer in these ranges is safe but the quality of the milk might not be as high.
Deep Freezer	0° F	12 months acceptable	Same as above. Baby may need vitamin supplements if drinking milk that has been frozen for long periods and not receiving fresh milk.

Guide To Storing Thawed Breast Milk²

	Room Temp (66° to 72° F)	Refrigerator (32° to 39° F)	Any Freezers
Thawed Breast Milk	1 hour	24 hours	Do not refreeze

¹Source: *La Leche League International (2010)*

²Source: *Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine (2010)*

³Source: *Best Practice for Expressing, Storing and Handling Human Milk. Jones, F. (2011)*