

How to Store Breastmilk at Home (for Healthy Newborns)

General Information

- Wash your hands with soap and water before you touch your breasts or the clean milk containers.
- Wash the milk containers in hot, soapy water. Rinse them well. Let them air dry.

Containers to Store Breastmilk

There are several styles of containers available for storing breastmilk. These include specially designed plastic bags, bottles and glass containers.

Bottle liners are not recommended because they rip and tear easily.

How to Store Fresh Breastmilk

- Label the container with the date.
- Pour the pumped milk into the storage container.
- You can collect small amounts of milk during the day and store it in the refrigerator. If you are at work, make arrangements with your employer.
- Always store the milk in the back of the refrigerator where it is the coldest. Do not keep it in the refrigerator doors or on the sides.

How to Store Frozen Breastmilk

- Label the container with the date.
- Pour the pumped milk into the storage container.
- If you are using special plastic bags, fill about three-quarters full. Leave space at the top of the bag to allow for expansion when the milk is frozen.



Fresh breastmilk can be safely kept in the freezer and refrigerator.

- Fold the top of the plastic bag over several times and seal with freezer or masking tape. You can also use a twist tie.
- Place the plastic storage bags into a larger plastic bag.
- Freeze breastmilk in 2- to 4-ounce portions. This is about what a newborn takes during a feeding.
- Always store the milk in the back of the freezer where it is the coldest. Do not keep it in the freezer doors or on the sides.

How to Warm Breastmilk From the Refrigerator

- Put the container of milk in a bowl of warm tap water or put it under warm running water.
- Gently shake the milk.
- Test the temperature by shaking out some milk on your wrist. It is normal for the milk to separate into a milk and a cream layer.
- **Warning: Do not warm up milk on the stove or in the microwave.** This can create “hot spots” that can burn your baby.

(over)

How to Thaw Frozen Breastmilk

You may thaw frozen breastmilk one of two ways. **For either way, be sure to use the oldest milk first.**

1. Place the container in the refrigerator.
Thawed milk can stay in the refrigerator for up to 24 hours.
2. Place the container in a bowl of warm tap water or put it under warm running water.

If you pump in small quantities, you can add fresh milk to frozen milk. Just chill the fresh milk before adding it. The amount of added cold milk must be less than the amount of the frozen milk.

How Long to Store Breastmilk

Breastmilk can be kept:

- Room temperature (50 to 85 F or 10 to 29 C):
 - Up to 4 hours is best, especially at higher room temperatures.
 - Up to 8 hours at cooler room temperatures.
 - Keep containers covered and as cool as possible.
- Insulated cooler bag with ice pack (59 F or cooler or 15 C or cooler):
 - Keep for 24 hours.
 - Make sure the ice pack touches the milk containers at all times.
 - Limit the number of times you open the cooler bag.
- Refrigerator (39 F or cooler or 4 C or cooler):
 - Up to 72 hours (3 days) is best.
 - Up to 8 days is OK if your refrigerator is very clean.
 - Keep the milk containers in the back of the main part of the refrigerator (not in the doors).
- Freezer compartment of a refrigerator with separate door (0 F or cooler or -18 C or cooler):

- Up to 6 months.
 - Keep the milk containers in the back or the bottom of the freezer.
- Upright or chest deep freeze (-4 F or cooler or -20 C or cooler):
 - Up to 12 months.
 - When milk is stored for longer times, the fats (lipids) will start to break down. The milk is still safe, but the milk quality can be lower.

You may refrigerate leftover breastmilk. Give it to your baby at the next feeding (within 4 hours).

To prevent waste, put less breastmilk in the bottle before the feeding. You can always add more as needed.

Color and Consistency of Breastmilk

The color, consistency and odor of your breastmilk may vary. This depends on what you eat and how long ago you gave birth.

Pumped milk can have a soapy or metallic odor when it is refrigerated or thawed. This does not mean the milk has gone bad. Call your lactation consultant if your milk has an odor.

Whom To Call With Questions

If you have questions or concerns about your baby's health (including feeding and weight gain), talk with your baby's health care provider.

If you have questions or concerns about breastfeeding, pumping, or are concerned about your milk supply, talk with your lactation consultant.