



Storage, Handling, and Warming of Breastmilk

Mothers work hard to pump, store and provide breastmilk for their baby while at child care. Your knowledge of how to handle breastmilk ensures the child benefits from each nutritious ounce.

Breastmilk

Breastmilk varies in color from a bluish white to a deep yellow color. The fat in the milk may rise to the top of the milk. This does not mean the milk is spoiled. Just swirl it gently to mix the layers. It may appear thinner than infant formula. However, it remains the best food for babies.

Storing breastmilk

- Breastmilk can be stored in a refrigerator for up to 3 days from the time it was expressed.
- Place breastmilk in the back of the refrigerator where it is coldest.
- Try to keep 2-3 ounces of breastmilk in your freezer in case the baby needs more milk one day.
- Breastmilk can be frozen for up to 3 months from when it was expressed.
- Rotate fresh and frozen breastmilk, using the oldest milk first. Once frozen breastmilk is thawed, use it within 24 hours and do not refreeze.

Handling breastmilk

Ask mothers to label their milk with baby's full name, date, and time collected. It's best for mothers to store frozen milk in small portions (1-4 ozs.) to decrease the chances of any waste. Ask mothers to bring in enough breastmilk to feed the baby each day. Be sure that each bottle or other container of breastmilk is labeled appropriately. Bottles should have just the amount both you and the mother think the baby will take at each feeding.



Breastmilk is not a body fluid that requires universal precautions. Simply handle breastmilk like other food.

Thawing/Warming of breastmilk

Thaw frozen breastmilk in the refrigerator overnight, or in a bowl of water. Heat water in a bowl, cup or other small container, then place bottle or bag of frozen milk in the water to warm; or use a bottle warmer. If breastmilk has separated, swirl gently once thawed to combine the layers. Do not set breastmilk out to thaw at room temperature. Do not thaw or warm breastmilk on the stove or in a microwave. Microwave heating causes hot spots in the milk that can burn the baby. These hot spots may stay even if you shake the bottle. Heating also destroys most of the natural substances in breastmilk that help protect babies from sickness.

- Throw away any unused breastmilk once thawed and offered to baby. Visit kellymom.com/bf/pumpingmoms/milkstorage/reusing-expressedmilk/ for more information from the Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine's (ABM) guidance on this issue.

Previously frozen milk may be kept in the refrigerator for up to 24 hours after it has finished thawing. **Do not refreeze.**