

When might I need to express my breastmilk?

- to have milk available when you are away from your baby
- if your breasts are too hard for your baby to latch on properly
- if your baby will not latch or latching is too painful
- if you are trying to increase your milk supply

How do I Store Expressed Breastmilk?

- always wash your hands before you handle your breasts when collecting milk or using the equipment for storing your milk
- the storage containers and pumping equipment should be very clean; glass containers are best, but a hard plastic container or bottle with the numbers 1, 2, 3, or 5 on the bottom can be used; plastic bags sold for storing breastmilk are also good
- label your container with the date and your name if necessary
- place milk at the back of the refrigerator or freezer, not in the door; constant opening of the refrigerator or freezer can change the temperature
- cool your fresh milk before adding it to other milk that is already cool or frozen
- if you plan to use your milk within 5 days, you do not have to freeze it
- if your baby is in the hospital ask your baby's health care provider for their rules for storing and transporting your breastmilk
- after the storage time has passed, throw out the breastmilk (see figure 2)



Figure 1—standard refrigerator

How do I thaw frozen breastmilk?

- always use the oldest breastmilk first
- never thaw breastmilk in the microwave; microwaving can destroy nutrients in the milk and may also create hot spots that can burn the baby's mouth
- thaw frozen breastmilk by leaving it in the refrigerator overnight or place the container in lukewarm water
- breastmilk should never be refrozen

How do I use stored breastmilk?

- after the breastmilk is thawed, keep it in the fridge and use it within 24 hours
- before feeding your baby the milk, warm the milk to body temperature in a container of warm water
- when the breastmilk is warm, swirl it to mix the breastmilk (do not shake)
- you may see white flecks in the milk; this is normal
- breastmilk does not always look pure white

Method	*Storage Time
Room Temperature (less than 25°C)	3 to 5 hours
Cooler with blue ice pack	Up to 24 hours
One door fridge	Up to 5 days
Freezer section inside a fridge	2 weeks
Freezer section of a standard refrigerator (see figure 1)	3 to 6 months
Deep freezer	6-12 months

Figure 2—breastmilk storage time guidelines

*Breastmilk storage times are for healthy full-term babies

2014 Adapted from "Learning to Breastfeed your Baby" - Hamilton Regional Lactation Committee



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