



How to Store Breastmilk

It is important that breastmilk is properly chilled, frozen and stored.

There are two ways to store breastmilk:

- **Chilled milk:** Expressed milk can be kept in the fridge at 4 degrees Celsius for up to 3-5 days before use.
- **Frozen milk:** Breastmilk can be frozen for 2 weeks in the freezer compartment inside a refrigerator or frozen for up to 3 months in the freezer section of a refrigerator with a separate compartment. It can be kept in a deep freezer, frozen below -18 degrees Celsius, for up to 6-12 months.

Freeze breastmilk in small quantities, ie in ice block trays. Once frozen, store in good quality freezer bags. Label with the date. It is easier to thaw small quantities. Thaw only the amount you need. Thawed breastmilk that has not been heated can be stored in the refrigerator for 24 hours.

- Thawed breastmilk that is not refrigerated must be used within 4 hours.
- Thawed breastmilk must not be re-frozen.
- Breastmilk cannot be reheated if baby doesn't finish the feed. Only warm up small amounts of breastmilk at a time.

Store breastmilk in clean containers. These are containers that have been thoroughly washed in hot water and detergent, rinsed well with clean water and dried with new paper towel or air-dried.

Containers suitable for storing breastmilk include:

- Plastic baby bottles.
- Freezable plastic cups or containers with lids.
- Small glass baby food jars.
- Special breastmilk freezer bags, available from the Australian Breastfeeding Association or pharmacies.
- Check with your hospital regarding containers for your expressed breastmilk. Some hospitals provide mothers with containers for your expressed breastmilk, if expressing for a premature baby.
- If you are expressing several times a day, your manual breast pump or pumping kit can be stored between sessions inside a clean plastic bag or closed container in the fridge. If you do not have access to a fridge, rinse the pump parts in cold water after each use and store in a clean, closed container.
- At least once in every 24 hours, wash the breast pump thoroughly as described above.
- For occasional use, wash the pump parts thoroughly after each use.
- Contact your child health nurse or Australian Breastfeeding Association counsellor for further assistance.

Freezing Milk

- Cool in the fridge first.
- When cold, place in the coldest part of the freezer.
- You can add freshly expressed milk to frozen milk, but always cool it in the fridge first.
- Label container with the date.

NB Frozen milk expands — fill containers three-quarters full.

Thawing and Warming Milk

- Frozen breastmilk can be thawed in the fridge over 24 hours, or warmed quickly. Do NOT leave to stand at room temperature.
- Place the container under running cold water, gradually making the water warmer until the milk becomes liquid.
- Warm chilled or thawed milk in a jug or saucepan of hot water until it is body temperature.
- Vigorous shaking can damage the milk, so mix gently.
- Microwave ovens should never be used to thaw or heat milk, as their heating is uneven and can damage the milk. Some infants have been burned by unevenly heated milk from microwave ovens.

NB

- Thawed breastmilk can be stored in refrigerator for 24 hours (not warmed).
- Thawed breastmilk that is not refrigerated must be used within 4 hours.
- Thawed breastmilk must not be re-frozen.
- Breastmilk cannot be reheated if baby doesn't finish the feed. Warm small amounts of breastmilk only.

Further Reading

Fact Sheet *How to Express Breastmilk*

For more information contact your Child Health Centre or the Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA).

Breastfeeding Helpline
1800 mum 2 mum

1800 686 268

The ABA Breastfeeding Helpline is available 7 days a week and is staffed by trained volunteer breastfeeding counsellors.

If you need help making phone calls in English, ring the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) on 131 450.

Email counselling and more information is available at www.breastfeeding.asn.au