

Mealtime Memo

for Child Care

Safely Storing Breastmilk

New moms may need help learning how to comfortably or properly breastfeed. They also may want to store their breastmilk and may need help with or more information on how to store it properly. This month's topic will provide information on storing breastmilk safely, including appropriate types of containers to use.

Keep in mind, these are considered general guidelines for storing breast milk:

Always remember to wash your hands with soap and water before you start to breastfeed or handle any milk. All parts of the pump that touch the milk should also be cleaned and washed with soap and water, then air dried. In case there is no water, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol to clean your hands.

Temperatures vary based on where the breastmilk is stored, so be aware that the length of time the milk is safe will also vary.

Fresh pumped breast milk can stay:

- On a countertop at a room temperature of 77 °F or colder for up to 4 hours,
- In a refrigerator that is 40 °F or colder for up to 4 days, and
- In a freezer that is 0 °F or colder for up to 12 months, although, up to 6 months is best.

If previously frozen breastmilk is thawed and left on the countertop at 77 °F or colder, it should be used within 1-2 hours. However, if it is refrigerated at 40 °F or colder, it should be used within one day. Never refreeze breastmilk that has thawed out. If an infant does not finish a bottle in one feeding, discard the breastmilk 2 hours after that feeding.

Storing Breastmilk Safely:

- Label each container with the child's name.
- If you have more than one child with the same name, talk to the parent(s) and decide how you will distinguish between the two. The decision should be in writing and be read by all child care employees. This process will help to make sure the correct item is served to each child.



- All stored milk should clearly be labeled with both the date the breastmilk was pumped and the date it expires.
- Do not store milk in the door of the refrigerator because the temperature will fluctuate.
- To help prevent throwing milk away, freeze it in amounts the child will drink. Also, be sure to always leave extra space (about 1 inch) in the container because the milk will expand during freezing.

Thawing Breastmilk Safely:

- Look at the dates on the bottle and thaw the oldest breastmilk first. Storing the oldest breastmilk at the front will make this easier.
- Never thaw breastmilk in a microwave because it will not thaw evenly and may have hot pockets.
- Thawing it in the refrigerator overnight is an excellent option.
- Breastmilk can also be thawed by running lukewarm water over the bottle or placing it in a container of water that is warm.
- Use breastmilk within 2 hours after you bring it to room temperature or after warming it.
- Do not refreeze breastmilk after it has been thawed.

Please see the charts below for definitions of some terms commonly used when referring to breastmilk. Breastmilk Storage Guidelines are also included.

Definitions for Breastmilk Terms	
Freshly Expressed or Pumped Breastmilk	Expressing milk by hand or pump from breast
Thawed, Previously Frozen	Frozen breastmilk being thawed in refrigerator, or in a container of warm or lukewarm water
Leftover from a Feeding (baby did not finish the bottle)	Milk that is leftover in a bottle after a feeding



Breast Milk Storage Guidelines

Type of Breast Milk	Storage Location and Temperatures		
	<u>Countertop</u> 77 °F (25 °C) or colder (room temperature)	<u>Refrigerator</u> 40 °F (4 °C) or colder	<u>Freezer</u> 0 °F (-18 °C) or colder
Freshly Expressed or Pumped	Do not use after 4 hours	Do not use after 4 days*	Up to 6 months is best. Do not use after 12 months.
Thawed, Previously Frozen	1-2 hours	Do not use after 1 day (24 hours)	Never refreeze thawed breastmilk
Leftover from a Feeding (baby did not finish the bottle)	Do not use after 2 hours after the baby is finished feeding. Discard any unused portion.		
*Child care providers participating in the Child and Adult Care Food Program may only store breastmilk in the refrigerator for 3 days (72 hours). This is stricter than the guidelines for storing breastmilk at home. According to the Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine, breastmilk may be stored in the refrigerator at home for up to 4 days.			

Adapted from USDA (2018) "Breastfed Babies Welcome Here! A Mother's Guide."

Additional Information to Remember

- Always make sure tubing, pump, and any other items used for feeding are cleaned (using soap and water) and are food grade.
- If you choose to pump and collect your breastmilk, use breastmilk storage bags (not bottle liners or other plastic bags) or clean food-grade containers with tight fitting lids that are made of glass or plastic. According to USDA, hard plastic bottles are best because they do not break and are easy to handle. The Mayo Clinic advises you should avoid bottles with the recycle symbol 7, due to the container possibly being made of a BPA-containing plastic. For more information on the concerns about BPA see What is BPA, and What are the Concerns About BPA at: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/nutrition-and-healthy-eating/expert-answers/bpa/faq-20058331>.
- When traveling with breastmilk, inform the TSA Officer if you do not want the milk tested and they can offer additional screening procedures.

References

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (September 18, 2018). *Proper storage and preparation of Breast Milk*. Retrieved from https://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/recommendations/handling_breastmilk.htm
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