

Pumping and Milk Storage

If you are unable to breastfeed your baby directly, it is important to remove milk during the times your baby normally would feed. This will help you continue to make milk. Before you express breast milk, be sure to wash your hands. Also, make sure the area where you are expressing is clean.

If you need help to get your milk to start flowing, have one of the following items nearby – a picture of your baby, a baby blanket, or an item of your baby’s clothing that has his or her scent on it. You can also apply a warm moist compress to the breast, gently massage the breasts, or sit quietly and think of a relaxing setting.



Ways to Express Your Milk

Type	How It Works	What’s Involved	Average Cost
Hand Expression	You use your hand to massage and compress your breast to remove milk.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires practice, skill, and coordination. • Gets easier with practice; can be as fast as pumping. • Good if you are seldom away from baby or need an option that is always with you. But all moms should learn how to hand express. 	Free, unless you need help from a breastfeeding professional who charges for her services.
Manual Pump	You use your hand and wrist to operate a hand-held device to pump the milk.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires practice, skill, and coordination. • Useful for occasional pumping if you are away from baby once in a while. 	\$30 to \$50
Automatic, Electric Breast Pump	Runs on battery or plugs into an electrical outlet.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be easier for some moms. • Can pump one breast at a time or both breasts at the same time. • Double pumping may collect more milk in less time, so it is helpful if you are going back to work or school full time. • Need places to clean and store the equipment between uses. 	\$150 to over \$250

Hospital-grade electric pumps can be rented from a lactation consultant at a local hospital or from a breastfeeding organization. These pumps work well for establishing milk supply when new babies can’t feed at the breast. Mothers who have struggled with other expression methods may find that these pumps work well for them.



Electric Pumps

You can keep germs from getting into the milk by washing your pumping equipment with soap and water and letting it air dry.



Milk Storage Bags and Bottles



Manual Pump

Storage of Breast Milk

Breast milk can be stored in clean glass or hard BPA-free plastic bottles with tight-fitting lids. You can also use milk storage bags, which are made for freezing human milk. Do not use disposable bottle liners or other plastic bags to store breast milk.

After each pumping

- Label the date on the storage container. Include your child's name if you are giving the milk to a childcare provider.
- Gently swirl the container to mix the cream part of the breast milk that may rise to the top back into the rest of the milk. Shaking the milk is not recommended – this can cause a breakdown of some of the milk's valuable components.

- Refrigerate or chill milk right after it is expressed. You can put it in the refrigerator, place it in a cooler or insulated cooler pack, or freeze it in small (2 to 4 ounce) batches for later feedings.

Tips for freezing milk

- Wait to tighten bottle caps or lids until the milk is completely frozen.
- Try to leave an inch or so from the milk to the top of the container because it will expand when freezing.
- Store milk in the back of the freezer – not in the freezer door.

Tips for thawing and warming up milk

- Clearly label milk containers with the date it was expressed. Use the oldest stored milk first.
- Breast milk does not necessarily need to be warmed. Some moms prefer to take the chill off and serve at room temperature. Some moms serve it cold.
- Thaw frozen milk in the refrigerator overnight, by holding the bottle or frozen bag of milk under warm running water, or setting it in a container of warm water.
- Never put a bottle or bag of breast milk in the microwave. Microwaving creates hot spots that could burn your baby and damage the components of the milk.
- Swirl the milk and test the temperature by dropping some on your wrist. It should be comfortably warm.
- Use thawed breast milk within 24 hours. Do not re-freeze thawed breast milk.

Guide to Storing Fresh Breast Milk for Use with Healthy Full-Term Infants

Place	Temperature	How Long	Things to Know
Countertop, table	Room temp (60°F-85°F)	Up to 3-4 hours is best. Up to 6-8 hours is okay for very clean expressed milk.	Containers should be covered and kept as cool as possible; covering the container with a clean cool towel may keep milk cooler. Throw out any leftover milk within 1 to 2 hours after the baby is finished feeding.
Small cooler with a blue-ice pack.	59°F	24 hours.	Keep ice packs in contact with milk containers at all times; limit opening cooler bag.
Refrigerator	39°F or colder	Up to 72 hours is best. Up to 5-8 days is okay for very clean expressed milk.	Store milk in the back of the main body of the refrigerator.
Freezer	24°F or colder	Up to 6 months is best. Up to 12 months is okay if milk is stored at 0°F or colder.	Store milk toward the back of the freezer where temperature is most constant. Milk stored at 0°F or colder is safe for longer durations, but the quality of the milk might not be as high.

Guide to Storing Thawed Breast Milk

	Room Temperature (60°F to 85°F)	Refrigerator (39°F or colder)	Any Freezers
Thawed Breast Milk	Up to 1-2 hours is best. Up to 3-4 hours is okay.	24 hours	Do not re-freeze.

I was committed to breastfeeding, but learning to nurse while learning to take care of a newborn was tough. My baby hated taking the entire nipple, and slipping off as she nursed was painful. And when it's 3 a.m. and your baby is fussing and you are sore, those bottles are incredibly tempting.

At the same time, most of the health professionals I came in contact with – as well as many of my family members and friends – seemed to be undermining my breastfeeding relationship. My daycare providers seemed afraid of my breast milk, my workplace didn't offer me a place to pump, and other mothers would act as though my breastfeeding was condemning their choice not to.

But I remembered that my nurse, Charlene, asked me to give it at least 8 weeks. I remembered that advice and decided to wait a little longer. I went back to Charlene for help and she showed me how to combat my daughter's slipping latch. She also put me in touch with a local support group and helped me find professionals who really knew how to help. They got me through the most critical period, but it was only my willingness to seek out their guidance that allowed me to keep nursing. Don't be afraid to ask for help whenever you need it!

– Lin
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