

STORAGE AND PREPARATION OF BREAST MILK

BEFORE EXPRESSING/PUMPING MILK

Wash your hands well with soap and water.



Inspect the pump kit and tubing to make sure it is clean.

Replace moldy tubing immediately.



Clean pump dials, power switch, and countertops with a disinfectant wipe



STORING EXPRESSED MILK



Store in breast milk storage bags or clean, food-grade containers. Make sure the containers are made of glass or plastic and have tight fitting lids.



Do not store breast milk in disposable bottle liners or plastic bags that are not intended for storing breast milk.

HUMAN MILK STORAGE GUIDELINES*

| TYPE OF BREAST MILK | STORAGE LOCATIONS AND TEMPERATURES | | |
|---|--|----------------------------------|--|
| | Countertop 77°F (25°C) or colder (room temperature) | Refrigerator 40 °F (4°C) | Freezer 0 °F (-18°C) or colder |
| Freshly Expressed or Pumped | Up to 4 Hours | Up to 4 Days | Within 6 months is best Up to 12 months is acceptable |
| Thawed, Previously Frozen | 1–2 Hours | Up to 1 Day (24 hours) | NEVER refreeze human milk after it has been thawed |
| Leftover from a Feeding (baby did not finish the bottle) | Use within 2 hours after the baby is finished feeding | | |

*Recommended storage times are important to follow for best quality.

STORE

Label milk with the date it was expressed and the child's name if delivering to childcare.

Store milk in the back of the freezer or refrigerator, not the door.

Freeze milk in **small amounts of 2 to 4 ounces** to avoid wasting any.



When freezing, leave an inch of space at the top of the container; breast milk expands as it freezes.

Milk can be stored in an insulated cooler bag with frozen ice packs for **up to 24 hours** when you are traveling.

If you don't plan to use freshly expressed milk **within 4 days**, freeze it right away.

THAW

Always thaw the oldest milk first.

Thaw milk under lukewarm running water, in a container of lukewarm water, or overnight in the refrigerator.

Never thaw or heat milk in a microwave. Microwaving destroys nutrients and creates hot spots, which can burn a baby's mouth.

Use milk **within 24 hours** of thawing in the refrigerator (*from the time it is completely thawed, not from the time when you took it out of the freezer*).

Use thawed milk **within 2 hours** of bringing to room temperature or warming.

Never refreeze thawed milk.



FEED

Milk can be **served cold, room temperature, or warm.**

To heat milk, place the sealed container into a bowl of warm water or hold under warm running water.

Do not heat milk directly on the stove or in the microwave.



Test the temperature before feeding it to your baby by putting a few drops on your wrist. It should feel warm, **not hot.**

Swirl the milk to mix the fat, which may have separated.

If your baby did not finish the bottle, leftover milk should be used **within 2 hours.**

CLEAN

Wash disassembled pump and feeding parts in a clean basin with soap and water. **Do not wash directly** in the sink because the germs in the sink could contaminate items.

Rinse thoroughly under running water. Air-dry items on a clean dishtowel or paper towel.

Using clean hands, store dry items in a clean, protected area.

For extra germ removal, sanitize feeding items daily using one of these methods:

- clean in the dishwasher using hot water and heated drying cycle (*or sanitize setting*).
- boil in water for 5 minutes (*after cleaning*).
- steam in a microwave or plug-in steam system according to the manufacturer's directions (*after cleaning*).



October 2024



FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT: <https://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/site.html>

Washington WIC is an equal opportunity provider. Washington WIC doesn't discriminate. To request this document in another format, call 1-800-841-1410. Deaf or hard of hearing customers, please call 711 (Washington Relay) or email wic@doh.wa.gov. Non-DOH 961-1330 April 2025