

# How to Collect and Store Your Breastmilk

You may need to express breastmilk if you are separated from your baby because of illness or prematurity or want to increase your breastmilk supply. If you are separated from your baby, start expressing as soon as possible and remove milk from your breasts at least 8 times in 24 hours. The amount of milk you collect depends on many things such as time of day, how long since the last feeding, and your level of stress.

## How do I collect my breastmilk?

Learning to express breastmilk may take time.

- Relax and decrease distractions to help your milk letdown (flow). Think about your baby.
- Use warm compresses or take a hot shower. Use gentle massage to stimulate your milk flow.
- Express as soon as possible after breastfeeding when your schedule allows. Your milk supply is usually most plentiful in the morning.

## What should I do to get ready?

- Wash your hands.
- Gather a clean glass, or hard plastic container, or plastic storage bag that is made especially for storing breastmilk.

## How do I express my breastmilk?

### By hand:

- Hold your breast in your hand with fingers below and thumb above the areola (dark area) about 1 to 1 1/2 inches behind the nipple.
- Push straight back toward your chest.
- Roll thumb and index finger towards the nipple. Do not squeeze the base of your nipple, as this will stop the flow of milk.
- Repeat all around your breast to get as much milk as you can.

- Switch to the other breast when you see the milk flow slow down. Repeat 10-15 minutes or until the flow of milk stops.

### By pump:

- When assembling your breast pump, please refer to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Set the pump on your breast so that it's centered over the nipple.

If you're using an electric pump:

- Put the pump in place before turning it on.
- Set the pump to the lowest setting and increase slowly until you feel a gentle tugging - strong suction can damage the nipple and cause pain.
- Pump for 10-15 minutes or until the milk is flowing very slowly.
- Massage your breast while pumping.
- Repeat with the other breast, or pump both breasts at the same time with a double pump.
- If you are pumping, hand express for a few minutes afterwards – you will express much more milk using both methods!

Watch a video at:

<http://newborns.stanford.edu/Breastfeeding/MaxProduction.html>

## How do I store my breastmilk?

- Store breastmilk in 2 to 4 ounce portions so that it isn't wasted.
- Leave a 1 inch space so that it has room to expand when it's frozen.
- Mark the date on each container.
- Place it in the back of a fridge or freezer where it is coldest.
- Cool milk in the fridge before you add it to milk already in the fridge or freezer.

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## If you are expressing breastmilk for a sick or premature baby in hospital:

- Always put your breastmilk in the refrigerator within 1 hour of expressing it.
- Do not store milk longer than 2 days in the refrigerator.
- Label your milk clearly with your name, date and time.
- Collect breastmilk in sterile containers.
- Transport your expressed breastmilk to the hospital using a cooler with ice packs.

## Guidelines for storing breastmilk for healthy babies who are at home::

Room Temperature	Cooler with ice packs	Refrigerator	Freezer inside a Refrigerator	Refrigerator Freezer with separate door	Deep Freezer
Freshly expressed breastmilk	4 - 8 hours ideal 8 hours acceptable	10 hours ideal 24 hours acceptable	3 days ideal 8 days acceptable	2 weeks	3- 6 months
Previously frozen breastmilk	Do not store	24 hours acceptable	24 hours	Never refreeze thawed milk	Never refreeze thawed milk

## How do I clean the equipment?

- For healthy, full-term babies receiving breastmilk, wash containers in hot soapy water and rinse well with hot water. Let the containers air dry.
- For electric pumps, do not wash the pump tubing. After each use, clean the parts of the pump that come in contact with your breastmilk. Wash them in hot soapy water, rinse and air dry. Sterilize these parts once a day until your baby is 4 months old.

## How do I thaw frozen breastmilk?

Thawed milk may smell and look different. But it's still safe to use. Shake it gently to remix the fat.

- Use the oldest milk first.
- Place the frozen milk in the fridge 8-12 hours before you need it.
- For faster thaw, put the container under cool and then warm running water.
- Never thaw breastmilk at room temperature or in the microwave.