

# How do I Store my Breast Milk?

**Do!**

- Refrigerate and/or freeze your pumped (or expressed) breast milk.
- Use clean bottles with screw caps, hard plastic cups that have tight caps, or nursing bags (pre-sterilized bags meant for breast milk).
- Clearly label with the date indicating when the milk was pumped.
  - ✓ If preparing for a caregiver, also include the child's name.

**Don't!**

- Do not add fresh milk to already frozen milk within a storage container. It is best not to mix the two.
- Do not save milk from a used bottle for use at another feeding.
- Do not refreeze thawed breast milk

## How Long Can I Store my Breast Milk?



### Breast Milk Storage Duration

Storage Location	Duration	Recommendation Notes
Countertop (room temperature less than 78 F / 26 C)	6-8 Hours	Store in a covered container and attempt to keep the milk as cool as possible.
Insulated Cooler Bag Less than 40 F / 4C)	24 Hours	Keep ice packs in contact with milk containers at all times, limit opening cooler bag.
Refrigerator 39 F / 4C)	5 Days	Write the date on each container. Store milk in the back of the fridge where temperatures are cooler.
Freezer Section Inside the Fridge (5 F / -15 C)	2 Weeks	Temperatures vary more in a style of refrigerator with one door, and which provides a section inside the refrigerator for freezing. As a result, breast milk lasts less time. <b>DO NOT REFREEZE.</b>
Freezer with Its Own Door (0 F / -18 C)	3-6 Months	Store milk towards back of freezer where temperature is most consistent. Milk stored for longer periods in the range, up to 6 months, are still safe but some of the lipids in milk undergo degradation resulting in lower quality. <b>DO NOT REFREEZE.</b>
Deep Freezer (-4 F / -20 C)	6-12 Months	Milk stored for longer periods in the range, up to 6 months, are still safe but some of the lipids in milk undergo degradation resulting in lower quality. <b>DO NOT REFREEZE.</b>

Source: Center for Disease Control and Prevention  
Chart Taken From: [www.babygearlab.com](http://www.babygearlab.com)

# How do I Safely Thaw Breast Milk?

- 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.
- Avoid using a microwave oven to thaw or heat bottles of breast milk
  - ✓ Microwave ovens do not heat liquids evenly. Uneven heating could easily scald a baby or damage the milk
  - ✓ Bottles may explode if left in the microwave too long.
- Excess heat can destroy the nutrient quality of the expressed milk
  - ✓ Do not re-freeze breast milk once it has been thawed
- 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 refreeze thawed breast milk.



Together Growing Stronger Families

Information was taken from the Office on Women's Health [www.womenshealth.gov](http://www.womenshealth.gov)  
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