

# STORAGE OF HUMAN MILK AT HOME

## Guidelines for refrigeration and freezing of human milk

Before you express wash your hands and dry them on a clean towel. It is recommended that breast pumps and storage containers be sterilised. Wash the containers first. Sterilise them by either totally immersing them in sterilising solution (follow the manufacturers instructions) or boil them for 10 minutes. Express breast milk into the container.

### Storage

Breastmilk	Room Temperature	Refrigerator	Freezer
Freshly expressed into a closed container	6–8 hrs (26°C or lower). If refrigeration is available store milk there	3–5 days (4°C or lower) Store in back of refrigerator where it is coldest	2 weeks in freezer compartment inside refrigerator. 3 months in freezer section of refrigerator with separate door. 6–12 months in deep freeze (-18°C or lower).
Previously frozen— thawed in refrigerator but not warmed	4 hours or less (ie the next feeding)	Store in refrigerator 24 hours	Do not refreeze
Thawed outside refrigerator in warm water	For completion of feeding	Hold for 4 hours or until next feeding	Do not refreeze
Infant has begun feeding	Only for completion of feeding, then discard	Discard	Discard

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fact sheet

Use plastic containers that are a convenient size for storing/freezing such as a feeding bottle, ice cube trays or a "Kaneson Plastic Bag" (purchased from the chemist or Nursing Mother's Association). If ice cube trays are used then small blocks of frozen breast milks can be transferred to a freezer bag. Small amounts can then be thawed preventing wastage.

Refrigerate immediately if possible, if not breast milk is safe to be used at room temperature for 6-8 hours.

It is not recommended to store frozen milk for longer than 4 months as the nutritional value of the milk at the time of freezing may not match the needs of the older baby when thawed.

Do not add freshly expressed milk to a partially filled container of frozen milk without first cooling the milk. This prevents the warm milk from thawing the top layer of the frozen milk.

Do not overfill the container or cap them too tightly when freezing the milk or the container might crack.

Label and date milk containers.

### **Thawing**

Use the oldest milk first.

Before thawing the frozen milk, loosen the cap slightly then place the container in a pan of tepid water. Alternatively place the container under running cold water and gradually increase the temperature of the water to hand hot. Otherwise thaw the breast milk in the refrigerator.

Refrigerate the thawed breast milk until ready for use.

Shake the container to evenly distribute the fat content.

Discard any thawed milk not used within 24 hours.

### Heating

Heat the container of milk in a container of warm to very warm water (hand hot).

Do not use the microwave oven to heat milk, as uneven heating can lead to scalding the baby's mouth.

Discard any unused heated milk. Do not refreeze.