

Breast Milk Storage & Thawing Guidelines for Healthy, Full-term Babies*

Confused about how long to store your expressed breast milk? You're not alone. Even well-respected health care organizations can't seem to agree on how long breast milk can be safely stored (see table on next page).

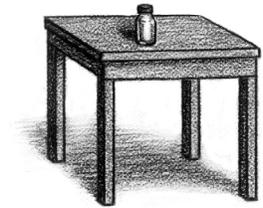
So what's a mother to do? Keep it simple. Handle your breast milk the same way you care for other foods. Store your milk in a cool place, refrigerate it as soon as possible, and freeze it for later use. Because storage time and temperature can affect the nutrients in breast milk, follow these simple guidelines:

- Store breast milk in any clean container made for food.
- Place a single serving in each container. Allow room for expansion, if you plan to freeze your milk.
- Label the container with your name, your baby's name, and the date and time the milk was collected.
- Store your milk in the center of the refrigerator or freezer compartment, away from the door.

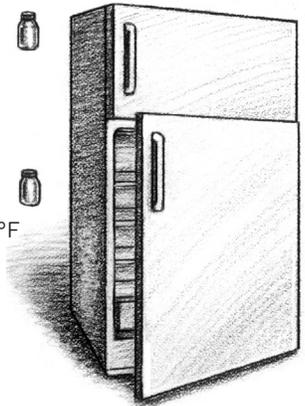
Storage recommendations are typically based on studies done under ideal conditions in which mothers have access to clean equipment and a cool room. Real-life conditions, however, are often less than ideal. To be safe, follow the Rule of 5's—store freshly expressed milk at room temperature for up to 5 hours, in the refrigerator for up to 5 days, and in the freezer for up to 5 months.

It's likely that breast milk can be safely stored for longer periods of time, but the Rule of 5's makes storage times easy to remember and ensures that your breast milk is safely stored. If you forget storage times, simply count the number of fingers on one hand—five!

Room
Up to 5 hours
at 85°F (29°C)
or cooler



Freezer
Up to 5 months
at 0°F (-18°C)
or cooler



Refrigerator
Up to 5 days at 39°F
(4°C) or cooler

Breast milk can be stored for different amounts of time depending on the temperature.

*Mothers of hospitalized infants should follow the hospital's guidelines for milk storage.

- To thaw your milk, place the unopened container in the refrigerator or in a pan of warm water. Do not thaw or warm any milk for your baby in a microwave oven. A microwave oven destroys live cells and heats the milk unevenly. Although a few drops of milk on your wrist or arm may not feel hot, portions of the milk can be hot, and hot milk can burn your baby.
- Milk that has been thawed in the refrigerator should be used within 24 hours. Milk that has been thawed in a pan of warm water should be used right away or stored in the refrigerator for up to 4 hours.
- Any milk left in the feeding container (bottle or cup) can be stored in the refrigerator and used within 1 hour to complete the feeding.



Store your milk in any clean container made for food.

Source	Room temperature 85°F (29°C) or cooler	Refrigerator 39°F (4°C) or cooler	Freezer 0°F (-18°C) or cooler
Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine (ABM) © 2010	Up to 4 hours is ideal Up to 8 hours is acceptable	Up to 3 days is ideal Up to 8 days is acceptable	Up to 6 months is ideal Up to 12 months is acceptable
American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) © 2011	Up to 4 hours	Up to 4 days	Up to 6 months
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) © 2010	Up to 8 hours	Up to 5 days	Up to 6 months
Human Milk Banking Association of North America (HMBANA) © 2011	Up to 6 hours	Up to 5 days	Up to 6 months is ideal Up to 12 months is acceptable
Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) © 2016	Up to 4 hours	Up to 4 days	Up to 6 months