

Breastmilk Storage

Handling and Pumping Guidelines

HUMAN MILK STORAGE – QUICK REFERENCE CARD

	Temperature	Storage Time
Freshly expressed milk		
Warm room	80-90°F / 27-32°C	3-4 hours
Room temperature	61-79°F / 16-26°C	4-8 hours (ideal: 3-4 hours)
Insulated cooler / ice packs	59°F / 15°C	24 hours
Refrigerated Milk (Store at back, away from door)		
Refrigerator (fresh milk)	32-39°F / 0-4°C	3-8 days (ideal: 72 hours)
Refrigerator (thawed milk)	32-39°F / 0-4°C	24 hours
Frozen Milk (Do not refreeze! Store at back, away from door/sides)		
Freezer compartment inside refrigerator (older-style)	Varies	2 weeks
Self-contained freezer unit of a refrigerator/freezer	<39°F / <4°C	6 months
Separate deep freeze	0°F / -18°C	12 months (ideal: 6 months)

These guidelines are for milk expressed for a full-term healthy baby. If baby is seriously ill and/or hospitalized, discuss storage guidelines with baby's doctor.

To avoid waste and for easier thawing and warming, store milk in 1-4 oz. portions. Date milk before storing. Milk from different pumping sessions/days may be combined in one container – use the date of the first milk expressed. Avoid adding warm milk to a container of previously refrigerated or frozen milk – cool the new milk before combining. Breastmilk is not spoiled unless it smells bad or tastes sour.

To thaw milk:

- Thaw slowly in the refrigerator (this takes about 12 hours – try putting it in the fridge the night before you need it). Avoid letting milk sit out at room temperature to thaw.
- For quicker thawing, hold container under running water – start cool and gradually increase temperature.

Previously frozen milk may be kept in the refrigerator for up to 24 hours after it has finished thawing. **Do not refreeze.**

To warm milk:

- Heat water in a cup or other small container, then place frozen milk in the water to warm; or
- Use a bottle warmer.
- **NEVER microwave human milk or heat it directly on the stove.**

The cream will rise to the top of the milk during storage. Gently swirl milk (do not shake) to mix before checking temperature and offering to baby.

If baby does not finish milk at one feeding, it is probably safe to refrigerate and offer within 1-2 hours before it is discarded.