

DIRECTIONS FOR SAFE HUMAN/BREAST MILK STORAGE

For feeding healthy, full-term babies

Where	Temperature	Time	Notes
At room temperature (fresh milk)	19° to 26° C or 66° to 78° F	4 hours (ideal) or up to 6 hours (acceptable) ¹	Contents should be covered and kept as cool as possible. Covering the container with a damp towel may keep milk cooler.
Insulated cooler bag	-15° to 4° C or 5° to 39° F	24 hours	Keep ice packs in constant contact with milk containers. Limit opening cooler bag.
Refrigerator	<4° C or <39° F	72 hours (ideal) or up to 8 days (acceptable) ²	Collect in a very clean way to minimize spoilage. Store milk in the back of the main body of the refrigerator.
Freezer (compartment of refrigerator with separate doors)	-18° C or 0° F	3 to 6 months	Store milk away from sides and toward the back of the freezer where temperature is most constant.
Deep Freezer	-20° C or -4° F	6 to 12 months	Milk stored longer than these ranges is usually safe, but some of the fats break down over time.

What are the best storage containers for human milk?

- Glass or non-polycarbonate plastic bottles or custom-purpose containers
- Custom-purpose milk storage bags

Can I combine milk from different pump sessions?

Yes, but cool each batch first and store according to the age of the oldest milk. It is best to freeze milk in small quantities (2-4 ounces depending on the age of your baby) within 2 days of expressing. Leave room in the container for expansion when freezing and date each container. As your milk cools, the cream may form a thin layer on the surface. Swirl to redistribute the cream when you warm the milk.

How do I heat human milk?

Microwaving destroys some of the anti-infective properties of milk and may create "hot spots" that could burn your body. Place the container of milk in a bowl of warm water, or under the hot water faucet, and heat to room temperature. Your baby may refuse milk straight from the refrigerator, but cold milk is not harmful!

How do I thaw frozen milk?

Place the container of milk in a bowl of warm water. Use the milk immediately or refrigerate it for up to 24 hours. Do not refreeze.

Why does my milk smell unpleasant when I thaw it?

Lipase, the enzyme that digests fats, stays active when milk is frozen. Some mothers have a high level of this enzyme and their milk smells and tastes soapy when thawed. The milk is not harmful but the baby may refuse it. You can scald your milk before storing it to make the lipase inactive by heating the milk to about 180 degrees F (82 degrees C), or until small bubbles form around the edge of the pan. Chill quickly and store.

¹ The preference is to refrigerate or chill milk right after it is expressed

² Eight days acceptable if collected in a very clean, careful way