



## How to Safely Store Breast Milk

Breastfeeding, also known as chest feeding, is a bonding experience. It provides many health and financial benefits. Infants fed breast milk are less likely to experience asthma, type 1 diabetes, ear infections, diarrhea, and vomiting. For the parent, breastfeeding can lower the risk of high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, breast cancer, and ovarian cancer. Breastfeeding can also save families money since it is a readily available source of nutrition.

Pumping and storing breast milk allows other caregivers to feed infants breast milk. When pumping, it is important to ensure that the pump and all infant feeding items are clean. Infant feeding items are the items used to feed babies. These items include bottles and the nipples, rings, and caps. Establishing a regular cleaning routine of all the pump parts and infant feeding items can help keep babies healthy. You should clean bottles and pumps after every feeding. You can clean bottles in the dishwasher or by hand. Wash pumps by hand unless the pump manufacturer says otherwise. If the pump tubing is moldy, discard and replace the tubing. For infants younger than 2 months or babies born premature, it's important to make sure infant feeding items are properly sanitized. Using a dishwasher will provide hot enough water to sanitize the items. If there's no access to a dishwasher, you can clean items in boiling water. Put the infant feeding items in a pot and cover with water. Bring the water to a boil, and boil for 5 minutes. Store pump and all infant feeding items in a clean, dry, protected area. Following cleaning guidelines will prevent germs from getting into the milk.

Before pumping milk, make sure that you wash your hands in warm soapy water, or sanitize with 60% alcohol sanitizer. Once the breast milk is pumped, you can leave it at room temperature for up to 4 hours. After 4 hours, you can store it in the fridge for up to 4 days, or freeze it below 0 degrees F for up to 6 months. Use 2 oz.- to 4 oz.-sized containers to minimize leftover milk. Make sure to label all stored milk as breast milk and add the date you pumped it. As you use up stored breast milk, be sure to use the oldest milk first to reduce waste. Do not store breast milk in the door of the fridge or freezer. The temperature change from opening the door can affect the temperature of the milk.

To reheat breast milk, warm it slowly. You can do this in multiple ways. One way is to submerge a bag of breast milk into warm water and let it thaw. You can also thaw breast milk in the refrigerator overnight. Using a microwave or other quick heat source is not recommended because the high heat can damage the nutrients in the milk. You can leave thawed breast milk at room temperature for 1 to 2 hours, and you can keep it in the fridge for up to 24 hours. Throw away any unused milk after these times and do not refreeze.

## Reference

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