

# Storing and Transporting of Breastmilk at home

Revised: April, 2017

## Storage of breast milk for babies at home

Breast milk may be stored in glass or plastic containers or sealable breast milk bags. Breast milk may also be frozen for use later

Refrigerated milk separates into layers, with hind milk as the top layer. Shake container vigorously to mix the milk before feeding your baby

- If not using breastmilk immediately refrigerate or freeze milk after expressing
- Use fresh milk whenever possible
- If you are going to freeze this milk you must freeze it within 2 days of expressing it (only ¾ fill container)
- Use oldest milk first (label milk with date and time of collection)

## To defrost breast milk

Breast milk may be defrosted by thawing in fridge. The defrosted breastmilk may then be kept at room temperature up to 4 hours or stored in fridge up to 24 hours. **DO NOT RE-FREEZE**

Breast milk may also be defrosted by placing the container of frozen breastmilk in warm water.

Discard left over milk from the feed – do not return to fridge or refreeze



## Using expressed breast milk

Warm defrosted /fresh breast milk by placing container of breast milk in warm – not boiling water.

### **Do not heat/warm breastmilk in the microwave\***

Test temperature of breastmilk on inside of wrist – the milk should be around body temperature.

Warmed breastmilk should be used within an hour of heating.

Do not re-warm milk – if not used discard

Do not re-freeze defrosted breastmilk

## Transporting breast milk

- Transport frozen breastmilk in an insulated container (an esky with a freezer brick)
- If some milk has thawed it should be used within 4 hours of thawing. Do not re-freeze it
- Place the labelled milk in the refrigerator, or freezer if still frozen immediately upon arrival of your destination.

Table 5.6: Length of time breast milk can be stored

Breast milk status	Storage at room temperature (26°C or lower)	Storage in refrigerator (5°C or lower)	Storage in freezer
Freshly expressed into sterile container	6–8 hours If refrigeration is available store milk there	No more than 72 hours Store at back, where it is coldest	2 weeks in freezer compartment inside refrigerator (–15°C) 3 months in freezer section of refrigerator with separate door (–18°C) 6–12 months in deep freeze (–20°C)**
Previously frozen (thawed)	4 hours or less – that is, the next feeding	24 hours	Do not refreeze
Thawed outside refrigerator in warm water	For completion of feeding	4 hours or until next feeding	Do not refreeze
Infant has begun feeding	Only for completion of feeding Discard after feed	Discard	Discard

\* Chest or upright manual defrost deep freezer that is opened infrequently and maintains ideal temperature

Sources: Lawrence & Lawrence 2005,<sup>26</sup> ABM 2004,<sup>373</sup> Slutzah et al 2010,<sup>375</sup> NZ Ministry of Health,<sup>376</sup>

## Resources

Australian Breastfeeding Association  
[www.breastfeeding.asn.au](http://www.breastfeeding.asn.au)  
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