

How To Express-Store-Use Breast Milk FAQ

Expressing your milk using a pump or by hand can be a great way to balance out your responsibilities to both work and your child. For a baby who cannot breastfeed, feeding your expressed milk is the next best thing.

Q: How do I express my milk by hand?

A: Many moms can massage milk out by hand without using a pump. Begin with clean hands. Massage all around the breast, even up under the arms. Then, stroke with your hands from the chest out to the nipples. Finally, use your fingers to squeeze out milk (Manual Expression of Breastmilk: Marmet Technique).

Q: What kind of breast pump should I use?

A: If you are only going to pump occasionally, a manual pump probably will work. If you will need to pump more often, at least one or two times a day, a small, personal electric pump probably is your best bet. If your baby is very small or very sick and can't breastfeed directly, a large, rental breast pump is what you need. There are many different brand models available for each of type of pump. In general, breast pumps made by companies that specialize in breast pumps are more effective. Talk with a [lactation consultant](#) or a health department breastfeeding promotion coordinator for more information on pumps and where you can get them in your area. Go to [La Leche League FOA](#) for information on breast pumps.

Q: How long can I store my milk?

A: Breast milk is a fresh food like any other. Once expressed, it is best to keep it in a cool place like a refrigerator or cooler until you are ready to feed it to baby. Breastmilk also can be frozen. Be sure to label the milk container with the day you expressed the milk so you use the oldest milk first. The table below gives conservative recommendations on how long expressed milk can be stored. If you are pumping milk for a premature or hospitalized baby, the hospital may have extra things you need to do.

General Guidelines for Storage of Breast Milk:

Location	Temperature	Duration
Room Temperature	Up to 77 degrees F	6-8 hours
Insulated Cooler Bag	5-39 degrees F	24 hours
Refrigerator	39 degrees F	5 days
Freezer compartment of refrigerator	5 degrees F	2 weeks
Freezer compartment of refrigerator with separate doors	0 degrees F	3-6 months
Chest or upright deep freeze	-4 degrees F	6-12 months

Q: How do I feed expressed milk?

A: If your milk is frozen, thaw it out overnight in the refrigerator or in a dish of warm water. If your milk was fresh in the refrigerator, warm it in a dish of warm water. Never use a microwave because it can make the milk too hot. You may notice a layer of cream on the top; just shake the milk up to mix the cream. Baby can be fed your milk in bottle or cup. Thawed milk should be fed within 24 hours. Any milk left over from a feeding should be thrown away.