



Health and
Social Care

Expressing, Storage and Transportation of Breastmilk



Supporting Breastfeeding

- Always wash your hands before expressing and handling breastmilk.
- Always use a sterile container with a lid, not the collection jug, to store breastmilk. Take care with plastic bags as they can puncture easily.
- Use a different storage container each time you collect milk. If necessary, newly collected milk may be cooled and added to previously stored milk on the same day only.



Safe Storage of Breastmilk

	Temperature (degrees C)	Best before	Use within
Freshly expressed milk - ideally refrigerate or cool immediately			
warm room	19-26	4 hours	6 hours
cool bag or box with icepacks	15	10 hours	24 hours
cool bag or box with icepacks	4-10	24 hours	3 days
Refrigerated milk - longer storage times are safe if milk is collected in a very clean careful way and cooled immediately			
Fresh milk	1-4	72 hours	8 days
Defrosted milk	1-4	as soon as possible	24 hours
Frozen milk - milk should not be refrozen			
Freezer	variable temp around -18	3 months	6 months
Freezer	constant temp -18 or below	6 months	12 months

(Source: La Leche League 2019)

The above guidelines apply to milk that will be given to a full-term healthy baby. If baby is premature, sick or in hospital, hospital staff can provide information on stricter storage guidelines, to ensure baby gets as much benefit from your milk as possible.

Expressed Milk should be labeled with date and time to ensure baby receives the milk in order as far as possible.

Transporting Breast Milk

Frozen breastmilk should be kept frozen during transportation. This will reduce the risk of the milk defrosting/warming, thus preventing the growth of bacteria.

A cool bag with ice packs should be used when transporting breastmilk - refer to 'Safe Storage of Breastmilk' table above for temperature and timings.

The cool bag should be thoroughly washed with warm soapy water each time it is used. Fresh breastmilk and frozen breastmilk should not be transported together as the fresh milk will encourage the frozen milk to defrost. This could increase the risk of infection.

Breastmilk should be removed from the cool bag as soon as possible once transported and stored in a fridge or freezer - refer to 'Safe Storage of Breastmilk' section.



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