

Family Education Sheet

Instructions for Labeling and Storing Breastmilk



Boston Children's Hospital

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Breastmilk offers babies many health benefits. This information sheet teaches you:

- How to prepare and store your breastmilk in a clean, safe way
- How to label and check your breastmilk so you know which milk belongs to your baby

For information about how to use the breast pump, see ["Instructions for Use of a Breast Pump."](#)

How do I prepare my milk?

Follow these steps:

- 1 Locate an automatic electric breast pump.
- 2 Request a Breastfeeding Admission Packet or gather together:
 - Clean breast pump accessory kit
 - Clean plastic containers (30 mL colostrum containers, 80 mL or 150 mL bottles)
 - Pre-printed breastmilk labels with your child's name, date of birth and medical record number
 - Hospital wash basin
 - Dishwashing liquid
 - Quick Clean Micro Steam Bag
 - Ballpoint pen and paper, notebook or pumping log
 - Breastfeeding information sheet on how to use a breast pump
- 3 Wash your hands well.
- 4 Collect your milk according to the instruction sheet on how to use a breast pump.

How do I label my breastmilk?

- When you get your pre-printed breastmilk labels for containers, **read what is on the label aloud to a staff person** to be sure it has your baby's name and date of birth.
- **After pumping milk, close the bottle with an airtight cover.** Do not touch the inside of the containers. Do not overfill them so there is room for it to expand once it is frozen.
- **Place your baby's breastmilk label on the plastic container.**
- **Write the date and time** of the collection on the label. Be sure to write clearly.
- **Give the breastmilk to the nurse or clinical assistant,** who will check the seal and make sure the label is correct. The nurse or clinical assistant will put the milk in the breastmilk refrigerator.

- Your breastmilk will be put in its own bin or bag with your baby's name on it.
- We can only store breastmilk pumped for Boston Children's patients in our breastmilk refrigerators and freezers. **If you are pumping for a child who is not a patient, you need to store that milk elsewhere.**

How do I get use my breastmilk?

- **Ask your baby's nurse or clinical assistant for your breastmilk.**
- Read the breastmilk label. It will have your baby's name, birth date and medical record number, any calorie additives and an expiration date.
- Before feeding, the nurse or clinical assistant will check your baby's ID and the breastmilk by scanning the barcode on the breastmilk label and the barcode on your baby's ID bracelet. This match will be confirmed on the computer.
- **Don't feed your baby until the label has been checked and scanned for a match.**
- Feed your baby. Use the milk within 1 hour. Throw the rest away.

How do I take home my breastmilk?

- When you are ready to go home, you may have a supply of breastmilk. Remember to bring all of your milk home with you.
- Read the labels on each container to make sure your baby's name is on every one of them.
- Always check the name on the milk container label before you feed stored milk to your baby at home.

How do I thaw frozen breastmilk at home?

- Begin by placing the container of milk in the refrigerator up to 8 hours before you use it.
- Use the oldest frozen milk first.
- Use thawed milk within 24 hours. **Do not refreeze it.**
- Do not use a microwave to thaw or heat breastmilk. This affects the quality of the breastmilk.
- Complete thawing by placing the container in a basin of lukewarm water. Thaw slowly, replacing the warm water as needed until the milk is room temperature.
- If you use a feeding bag and pump, don't put more than 4 hours' worth of a feed in the bag at a time. Mix the fat that rises to the top of the bag back into the milk. Squeeze the bag gently every hour.

How to store breastmilk at home

Type of Milk	Room temperature	Refrigerator	Freezer
Fresh breastmilk	4–6 hours	5 days	6–12 months (-20°C)
Thawed breastmilk	Until feeding is finished up to 1 hour	24 hours	Do not refreeze
Breastmilk with added calories	Until feeding is finished up to 1 hour	24 hours	Do not refreeze

Please note: Times are different for hospital use.