

Breastfeeding: How to Label, Identify, Store, Mix and Heat Breast Milk in the Hospital

Please follow these rules to store, heat and mix breast milk while your baby is in the hospital.

Storage and labeling

- All containers and bottles of breast milk must be labeled with a Children's Hospital of Wisconsin (CHW) bar-code breast milk label. Write the date and time the milk was pumped on the label. Do not write on or cover the bar-code.
- Milk brought from a different hospital must be re-labeled with a CHW bar-code breast milk label. Write the date and time the milk was pumped.
- A new container from the hospital should be used at each time you pump.
- Pump into a container that is larger than the amount of milk you pump. You can store it in those containers or pour into smaller containers. After that, use the size container needed for the amount of milk pumped.
- When freezing milk, store milk in 2 to 5 ounce amounts for easier thawing and less waste.
- Leave extra room at the top of the container so the frozen milk has room to expand.
- Store breast milk on a shelf, not in the door, of the freezer or refrigerator.
- Storing breast milk at home is different than in the hospital. Ask for the Collection and Storage: At Home (#1401) handout.
- Freeze within 24 hours of pumping milk if it will not be fed within 96 hours (4 days).

In hospital storage guidelines

Freeze in 24 hours of pumping if not feeding within 96 hours.	Room Temperature	Refrigerator	Refrigerator Freezer	Deep Freezer
Fresh breast milk	1 hour	96 hours	3 months	6 months
Thawed breast milk (was frozen before)	1 hour- If warmed for feeding	24 hours	Never refreeze thawed milk	Never refreeze thawed milk
*Fortified breast milk	1 hour-If warmed for feeding	24 hours	Never freeze fortified breast milk	Never freeze fortified breast milk

*Fortified means some nutrients have been added to the breast milk.

Process to identify of breast milk

This must be done when CHW staff, the mother or family prepares and feeds breast milk.

1. When putting in or removing breast milk from the refrigerator or freezer, staff or family must identify the milk. Read and confirm the correct infant name and birth date on the storage bin **and** on the breast milk container.
2. Breast milk must be scanned at the baby's bedside. Staff will scan the bar code on the patient identification band and the bar code on the breast milk label on the container.
3. Breast milk must be bar-code scanned when **preparing** the feeding (thawing, warming or fortification). It must be scanned again when **feeding** the breast milk (syringe, bottle or feeding pump).

Thawing/mixing/warming

- Breast milk can be quickly thawed by placing the container in warm (not hot) water or running the container under warm (not hot) water. The breast milk should not be hot against your skin. It should be used for this feeding only. Dry the bottle off when using water to thaw or warm breast milk.
- You also may thaw breast milk overnight in the refrigerator.
 1. Write **thawing** on a hospital food label with the time and date the breast milk is taken from the freezer.
 2. Once milk is thawed, it should be fed within 24 hours.
 3. Change the hospital food label to say **expires** with the time and date the breast milk expires. It expires 24 hours after it is thawed. It should then be thrown away.
- **Do not** thaw breast milk in a microwave. It can have hot spots in the milk which can burn your infant's mouth. It can cause steam to build up in the bottle and explode and burn you or others. It also reduces nutrients in the milk.
- Breast milk should not be refrozen once it is thawed.
- Some units have waterless bottle warmers for thawing and warming breast milk. Staff will show families how to use these bottle warmers.
- Babies usually like breast milk to be warmed to skin temperature. Put a drip or two on the inside of your wrist. It should be the same temperature as your skin, not too cool or too hot. **Never microwave to heat.**

Fortified breast milk (nutrients have been added)

1. Label containers and feeding bottles of fortified breast milk with a bar-code breast milk label.
2. Write the time and date fortifier was added, type of fortifier, and list what the contents are after being fortified. Example: 1 tsp SSC to 4 oz breast milk = 22cal breast milk.
3. Fortified breast milk expires after 24 hours.

Feeding

All feeding bottles containing breast milk must be labeled with a bar-code breast milk label. Put the date and time the feeding was prepared on the label.

1. Feed all fresh or frozen colostrum first. Colostrum is pumped the first 4 days. It is richer and has lots of infection fighters (immune factors) in it. If fresh is available, use it first. If using frozen, use the oldest date first.
2. After all colostrum is fed, feed **fresh** breast milk first. Fresh breast milk has more nutrient and immune factors in it. If using frozen breast milk, use the oldest date first.
- If your baby drinks from a bottle but does not finish it all, **do not save the rest for later**. It needs to be thrown away. The saliva from your baby's mouth mixes with the milk and can cause germs to grow. This can make your baby sick.

ALERT: Call your doctor, nurse, or Lactation Management Service (leave a voice mail message at 414-266-1757) if you have any questions or concerns or if you have special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

This teaching sheet is meant to help you care for your child. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.