

# Food Safety for Families

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## Safe Practices for Breast Milk

Dear Mother,

You want the best for your baby and that is why you are thinking about breastfeeding. Breastfeeding is the optimal way of providing ideal food for your infant. Breastfeeding is encouraged because it has the right amount of nutrients your baby needs plus it is safer and less expensive than infant formula. Breast milk itself contains many infection-fighting properties to protect your baby. These properties are best when breast milk is fresh. Many mothers are not



able to provide fresh milk every feeding with today's busy life. Proper handling and storage procedures are important to follow to keep your breast milk safe and your baby from becoming sick. Infants have a higher rate of many foodborne illnesses

than adults. It takes less bacteria (germs) to make an infant sick than it does for an adult. Harmful bacteria are more damaging to infants because their immune systems are not fully developed.



## Guidelines

**Follow these simple guidelines to keep your infant safe and healthy while you are handling and storing breast milk:**

- ◆ Wash hands with hot, soapy water before expressing or handling milk or equipment.
- ◆ When collecting milk, store in a **clean, sterilized** container. Screw cap baby bottles, hard plastic cups with tight caps and heavy duty storage bags that fit directly into nursery bottles work well.
- ◆ Clearly label milk with the date milk was expressed.
- ◆ Always use the oldest milk first.
- ◆ Do **NOT** mix frozen milk with fresh milk.
- ◆ Do **NOT** save milk from a used bottle for use at another feeding.

## Safe Practices for Breast Milk



### FightBac!®

Bacteria (germs), viruses and parasites are everywhere in the environment! They are organisms that you cannot see, smell, or taste. In fact, they can contaminate food and cause life-threatening illness. Foodborne illness (food poisoning) can strike anyone, especially young children, infants, pregnant women (it endangers their unborn babies too), older adults, and persons with weak immune systems.

### Storage Duration of Fresh Human Milk for Use with Healthy Full Term Infants

Source: modified from <http://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/recommendations/>

Location	Temperature	Duration	Comments
Countertop, table	Room temperature (up to 77°F)	4-6 hours*	Baby bottle should have the cap on the nipple and kept as cool as possible; covering the container with a cool towel may keep milk cooler.
Insulated cooler bag	5-39°F	24 hours	Keep ice packs in contact with milk containers at all times, limit opening cooler bag. Keep cap on nipple.
Refrigerator	39°F	5-8 days	Store milk in the back of the main area of the refrigerator with cap on.
<b>Freezer</b>			Store milk toward the back of the freezer, where temperature is most constant. Milk stored for the longest duration in the range listed is safe, but some of the fats in the milk break down resulting in lower quality.
Freezer compartment of a refrigerator	5°F	2 weeks	
Freezer compartment of refrigerator with separate doors	0°F	3-6 months	
Chest or upright deep freezer	-4°F	6-12 months	

\*Breast milk contains a number of components that prevent the growth of bacteria

### Safely Thawing Breast Milk

- Transfer milk to the refrigerator or swirl the bag of milk in a clean bowl of warm water to thaw.
- Do NOT re-freeze breast milk once it has been thawed.
- Avoid using a microwave oven to thaw or heat up milk because:
  - uneven heating can scald the baby
  - bottles may explode
  - the heat can destroy nutrients

