How to Store Breastmilk

Expressed or pumped breastmilk is easy to keep in the fridge or freezer.

- Breastmilk can be stored in clean glass or hard plastic containers (standard baby bottles; food storage containers with tight-fitting, solid lids), or in breast milk freezer bags. Refer to Health Canada for information on the safe use of plastic containers.
- Pour expressed milk into clean container. Leave space at the top of the container for expansion of milk if freezing (fill container ¾ full)
- Label container with the date the milk was expressed.
- Freeze milk you don’t intend to use within 3 days. Cool milk first in fridge before freezing.
- You can add cooled milk to milk that is already in the fridge or freezer.

### Milk Storage Guidelines:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Storage Time for Expressed Breast Milk</th>
<th>Room Temperature</th>
<th>Cooler with Ice Packs</th>
<th>Refrigerator *Store in the fridge not in the fridge door</th>
<th>Refrigerator Freezer (2 door refrigerator)</th>
<th>Deep Freeze</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fresh</td>
<td>4 hours</td>
<td>24 hours</td>
<td>3 days</td>
<td>6 months</td>
<td>Up to 12 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thawed in fridge, not warmed</td>
<td>4 hours</td>
<td>4 hours</td>
<td>24 hours</td>
<td>Do not refreeze</td>
<td>Do not refreeze</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Do not store milk that has been warmed
To thaw frozen breastmilk
- always use the oldest milk first
- thaw only what you need for one feeding
- thaw breastmilk by putting the container:
  - in the fridge, or
  - in a bowl of warm water
- DO NOT thaw breastmilk in the microwave
Breastmilk can separate when frozen, gently swirl to remix once it thaws.

To warm breastmilk for feeding
- an individual feeding can be warmed by:
  - standing the container briefly in warm water
  - DO NOT warm breastmilk in microwave or on the stove

Vancouver Coastal Health is committed to helping women successfully breastfeed. Please call your local Public Health Unit for additional information.

Other information on parenting are available at your local Community Health Office/Centre or online at http://vch.eduhealth.ca

You can get further information about breastfeeding from:
Public Health Nurse or
Community Dietitian at Vancouver Coastal Health...........................................www.vch.ca
HealthLinkBC ...........................................................................................................8-1-1
Translation services are available in 130 languages............... www.healthlinkbc.ca
VCH Parenting Website ................................................................. parenting.vch.ca

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The information in this document is intended solely for the person to whom it was given by the health care team.