

STORAGE GUIDELINES FOR HUMAN MILK

NOTE: These guidelines are for mothers who are expressing milk for a full-term healthy baby. Please use clean containers, and wash your hands with soap and water before expressing or pumping.

HUMAN MILK STORAGE FOR HEALTHY INFANTS¹

Location	Temperature	Duration	Comments
Countertop, table	Room temperature (up to 77°F or 25°C)	4-6 hours	Containers should be covered and kept as cool as possible; covering the container with a cool towel may keep milk cooler.
Insulated cooler bag	5-39°F or -15-4°C	24 hours	Keep ice packs in contact with milk containers at all times, limit opening cooler bag.
Refrigerator	39°F or 4°C	5 days	Store milk in the back of the main body of the refrigerator.
Freezer — Compartment of refrigerator	5°F or -15°C	2 weeks	Store milk toward the back of the freezer, where temperature is most constant. Milk stored for longer durations in the ranges listed is safe, but some of the lipids in the milk undergo degradation, resulting in lower quality. In view of this, you may want to give a combination of refrigerated and frozen milk to your baby. Latest WHO guideline limits storage to 6 months only
Freezer — Refrigerator/freezer with separate doors	0°F or -18°C	3-6 months	
Freezer — Chest or upright manual-defrost deep freezer	-4°F or -20°C	6 – 12 months	

¹Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine Clinical Protocol Number #8: Human Milk Storage Information for Home Use for Healthy Full-Term Infants, Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine, Princeton Junction, NJ, 2004.

When providing milk for a baby who is premature /seriously ill and/or hospitalized, check with healthcare providers for instructions. Below is a general guideline:

- Not recommended to store at room temperature or freezer compartment of 1 door refrigerator
- Up to 24 hours if refrigerated at 39°F or 4°C
- Up to 3 months if frozen in 2 door refrigerator with separate freezer compartment at 0°F or -18°C
- Up to 12 months if kept in Chest or upright deep freezer at -4°F or -20°C

TO SAVE OR DUMP?

Type of Milk	Save or Dump?	Why
Milk remaining in the bottle that has been offered to baby	Use for next feeding, otherwise discard.	Bacteria from the baby's mouth may have entered the milk during the feeding. This may lead to bacterial contamination if it sets too long (though as yet there is no research available).
Milk that has been thawed	Save in the refrigerator for 24 hours after thawing, then discard. Do not refreeze.	Milk that has been frozen has lost some of the immune properties that inhibit bacterial growth in fresh refrigerated milk.
Milk that has been kept in the refrigerator for five days	Transfer to storage in the freezer, or discard.	Bacterial growth is not a problem, but milk sometimes picks up odors or flavours from the refrigerator or the container.