



BETWEEN FEEDS

BREAST MILK

HANDLING & STORAGE GUIDE

A practical, evidence-based guide to expressing, storing, thawing, and feeding expressed breast milk safely.

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This guide is for educational and organisational purposes and does not replace individual medical advice from your baby's paediatrician or your own healthcare provider. Storage guidance follows current CDC recommendations for healthy, full-term infants at home.

Why I Made This

On choice, support, and shared care in the fourth trimester

The postpartum period is a time for a mother to heal- from everything her body has been through in pregnancy and delivery, while her body and her baby learn the rhythm of lactation and breastfeeding together.

Some mothers breastfeed directly. Many combine breastfeeding with top feeds, and many move to expressed or formula bottle feeds altogether — by choice, or because life makes that the right path for them. Every one of these choices deserves respect, without judgement.

What I hope this guide does, more than anything, is help a mother feel that she is not alone in whichever path she chooses and support her, as best I can, in doing it well.

We live in a time when many parents balance working life with raising a baby, and many families lean on a trusted person — a partner, a grandparent, a babysitter, or a nanny, to help care for their child. When that happens, feeding often becomes a shared responsibility, not the mother's alone.

Helping the person who steps in feel confident and prepared- whether that's a parent, a family member, or a caregiver, is one of the simplest things we can do for a family which is meaningful.

A small guide for an important part of your day

There will be days things don't go exactly to plan, and that's normal- this isn't about perfection. The more people involved in caring for your baby, the more useful it is for everyone to work from the same simple instructions. You don't need to memorise every number yourself- that's what these two pages are for. Print them, save them on your phone, or go through them with your baby's caregiver before you hand over- one for expressing and storing, one for thawing and feeding

I hope this makes one small part of these early months a little less complicated — for you, and for everyone helping you care for your baby.

-Dr. Varsha Govindaswamy

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Disclaimer

**This guide is written for healthy, full-term infants being cared for at home. Premature, sick, hospitalized, immunocompromised, or medically complex babies may need different storage, handling, feeding, or cleaning instructions. In those situations, follow the baby's paediatrician, neonatal team, lactation team, or hospital's specific instructions.*

**Product names are included only as examples for reference and convenience; I do not promote, endorse, or have any commercial affiliation with any of the products or brands mentioned.*

FOR THE PARENT

Expressing & Storing

The part that usually falls to the mother or pumping parent

Before you pump

- ☐ Wash hands with soap and water for 20 seconds before touching pump parts.
- ☐ After each session, take apart every part touching breast or milk ([flanges](#), [valves](#), [membranes](#), [connectors](#), [bottles](#)), rinse under running water, then wash with ordinary dish soap and warm water in a basin used only for pump parts — not the kitchen sink.
- ☐ Air-dry parts fully — don't towel-dry — then store the reassembled kit somewhere clean, like an unused sealable bag. Tubing only needs washing if visibly soiled, if mould or milk gets inside, replace the tubing.
- ☐ Daily sanitizing too (boiling for 5 minutes, steaming, or dishwasher's sanitizing/heated dry cycle) — but only needed if baby is under 3 months, premature, immunocompromised, or currently ill.

Storage duration

MILK TYPE	STORAGE LOCATION	MAX TIME
Freshly expressed	Room temp ≤25°C / 77°F	4 hours
	Refrigerator ≤4°C / 40°F	4 days
	Freezer ≤-18°C / 0°F	6 months best, up to 12 months
Previously frozen, fully thawed	Refrigerator ≤4°C / 40°F	24 hours
Previously frozen, thawed & warmed / at room temp	Room Temperature	2 hours
Leftover after a feed	Room Temperature	Use within 2 hours after the feed ends

Based on current CDC guidance for a healthy, full-term infant at home.

Storing it right

- ☐ Good containers: bags made for breast milk (e.g. [Lansinoh](#), [Medela](#), [NUK](#), [Kiinde](#)), or glass/BPA-free plastic with a tight screw lid, **never bottle liners or ordinary plastic bags**.
- ☐ Label every container (date & time of expressing and name of the baby). Store toward the back of the fridge or freezer, not the door- as temperature fluctuates too much.
- ☐ Leave about an inch of space at the top of frozen bags- milk expands as it freezes.
- ☐ Freeze in small 60–120 mL (2–4 oz) portions to avoid waste, and use **FIFO -- First In, First Out**- so older milk goes first.
- ☐ Chill fresh milk before combining with already-cooled or frozen milk — never add warm to cold.

Taking milk to childcare

- ☐ Label each container clearly before you leave.

- ☐ Transport in an [insulated cooler bag](#) with frozen ice packs.
- ☐ Refrigerate or freeze it as soon as you arrive.

FOR THE CAREGIVER

Thawing, Feeding & Reuse

For whoever is feeding the baby — partner, grandparent, nanny, or babysitter

Thawing

- ☐ Preferred: move the frozen bag to the fridge 12–24 hours before it's needed.
- ☐ Faster: place the sealed container under lukewarm or warm running water.
- ☐ Never microwave breast milk or heat it directly on the stove.
- ☐ Never refreeze milk once it has fully thawed- use within 24 hours of thawing in the fridge.

Warming & feeding

- ☐ Milk doesn't need to be warmed- it's fine cold or at room temperature if baby accepts it.
- ☐ If warming, keep the container sealed and closed while it sits in warm water.
- ☐ Swirl gently to remix fat layers - never shake vigorously.
- ☐ Check the temperature on your wrist before offering it- it should feel lukewarm, not hot.
- ☐ Always use the oldest suitable milk first- check the label.
- ☐ Storage bags are single-use- pour into a bottle to feed, then discard (unless it's a bag-as-bottle system like Kiinde). Wash and air-dry the bottle like a pump part before reuse.

If baby doesn't finish the bottle

- ☐ Start a timer once the feed begins.
- ☐ Use leftover milk within 2 hours of the feed ending- baby's saliva introduces bacteria into the bottle that multiply over time.
- ☐ After that window, discard it. Don't re-warm, re-chill, or re-offer it later.

Today's handover log

Filled in by the parent, used by whoever is feeding.

Bottle	Amount (ml/oz)	Type (Fresh / Thawed)	Feeding Start Time	Discarded By
#1				
#2				
#3				
#4				
#5				

Special instructions: _____