

Provider Information

BF – Breastfeeding

BF-CS COLLECTION AND STORAGE OF BREASTMILK

OUTCOME: The parent/family will understand the collection and storage of breast milk.

STANDARDS:

1. Explain the role of manual pumps for occasional use and hospital grade electric pumps for long-term use.
2. Explain that pumped breast milk may have variable appearances and will separate if left standing and will need to be remixed by shaking the milk.
3. Explain storage recommendations for breast milk, e.g., milk stays good in the refrigerator for 48 hours, in the refrigerator freezer for 3 month, and in the deep freezer for 6 months.

Highlights of the Collection and Storage of Breast Milk

- Exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months
- How to maintain lactation for exclusive breastfeeding for 6 months
- Breastfeeding continues to be important after 6 months when other foods are given
- How to express, handle, and store breast milk, including manual expression
- How to sustain lactation if the mother is separated from her infant or will not be exclusively breastfeeding after discharge
- Education provided on how to give baby any fluid supplementation

The importance and duration of Breastfeeding:

Breastfeeding mothers should expect to breastfeed exclusively for the first six months of their baby's life and to understand that breastfeeding continues to remain important after 6 months of age when other foods are given to the baby. Nutritionally breast milk is best and the skin-to-skin contact is important to the baby and the mother's wellbeing. To ensure that the baby has enough milk for every situation that might arise, the mother should be encouraged to collect and store breast milk – in addition to the milk provided to the baby when the mother breastfeeds. When emergencies or situations arise in which the mother cannot breastfeed, this stored breast milk will be given to the baby in a bottle.

Collection and Storage of Breast milk

Many mothers find it necessary to collect their breast milk and store it to be used later. Mothers maybe returning to work or school or for mothers who may need to be separated from their infants.

Collecting Breast milk

- Wash hands well with soap and water.
- Wash all the collecting bottles and breast pump parts that touch your breasts or the milk. Use hot, soapy water or a dishwasher. Rinse carefully. Air-dry on a clean towel. If your baby is premature or ill, the hospital may ask you to sterilize your pump parts.
- Read the instructions book that comes with your pump and follow the suggestions.
- Practice pumping when you are rested, relaxed and your breasts feel full. Once a day try to breastfeed your baby only on one side and pump the other breast. Or pump for a few minutes if your baby skips a feeding or breastfeeds for only a short while. Be sure to use the right size breast shield so that your nipple fits comfortably. Breast shields come in different sizes to fit all nipple sizes, from small to extra large.
- Employed moms can help their baby learn to take a bottle once breastfeeding is going well. It is best to wait for three (3) to four (4) weeks to introduce bottles. If you are having problems breastfeeding, ask for help from lactation consultant or health care provider.
- Begin to pump to store milk one (1) to two (2) weeks before returning to work. Many employed moms use the fresh milk they pump at work for feedings the next day. They refrigerate Friday's milk for use on Monday. Save your frozen milk for emergencies.
- Pump three (3) times during an eight (8) hour work shift, or every three (3) hours you are away from your baby. Ten minutes of pumping during breaks and 15 minutes of pumping during lunch with a good pump will help protect your milk supply. If you cannot pump three (3) times, pump as much as you can during each day.
- Breastfeeding in the evening and on days off helps maintain your milk supply and protects your special bond with your baby.

Storing Breast milk

- It is normal for pumped milk to vary in color, consistency and scent depending on your diet. Stored milk separates into layers. Cream will rise to the top. Gently swirl the warmed bottle to mix the milk layers.
- You can continue to add small amounts of cooled breast milk to the same refrigerated container throughout the day. Avoid adding warm milk to already cooled milk.
- Pumped milk may be added to frozen milk provided it is first chilled and the quantity is less than what is frozen.
- Store your milk in BPA-free breast milk collection bottles or in disposable bags specifically designed for breast milk.

- Freeze milk in two (2) to five (5) oz portions. Small amounts will thaw more quickly. You will waste less milk this way and will avoid over-feeding. Liquids expand when frozen. Be sure to leave some extra room at the top of the container so the bottle or bag will not burst.
- Seal containers tightly. Write the date on a piece of tape on the bag or bottle. Use the oldest milk first.
- Some mothers report their defrosted breast milk has a soapy taste or odor. This is due to a normally occurring enzyme, lipase, which helps to digest the fat content of the breast milk. To avoid this from occurring, scald the breast milk (do not bring to a boil) on a stove until tiny bubbles appear along the sides of the pan; do this before it is frozen. The scalding process will neutralize the enzyme preventing the soapy taste or smell.

You can store breast milk:

At Room Temperature 4-8 hours in a cool room

In the Refrigerator: 3-8 days

In the Freezer: up to 3 months

Click here for a Patient Education Handout for the mother on [Collection and Storage of Breast milk](#)

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