



Breastfeeding Your Baby

How to pump and store your milk

Because of the many advantages of breastfeeding, Kaiser Permanente and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommend that you feed your baby only breast milk for the first 6 months of life. Then, continue nursing while adding other foods for the first year of your baby's life.

When can I express (pump) my breastmilk?

Pumping your breast milk is a great way to be sure that your baby gets the full benefit of your milk, even if you need to be away at work or for other commitments. You can begin expressing milk any time after your baby is 1 month old. If you are returning to work, start expressing milk at least 2 weeks before. This will give you time to learn what works best for you and your baby. Lactation consultants are available to assist you if you have any concerns.

How can I pump my breast milk?

There are 4 ways to express breast milk. (See below.) No matter which method you use, it's important to:

- Always wash your hands and any pumping equipment before you begin.
- Make sure to follow the manufacturer's directions that come with the pump.

Electric breast pumps let you express milk from both breasts at the same time.

Pros:

- Strongest and most effective type of pump.
- Enables pumping on both sides, which boosts prolactin levels to help ensure a good milk supply.
- Most often recommended by lactation consultants.
- Possible to learn to operate the double pump with one hand, leaving the other free to work or eat.
- Durable and can be used with future children.

Cons:

- Most expensive.
- Larger and bulkier than other equipment.

Hand-operated breast pumps are useful for mothers with an established milk supply who need to pump once or twice a day.

Pros:

- Small and portable.
- Inexpensive.
- No electricity or battery needed.

Cons:

- Requires muscle.
- Requires both hands.
- Not enough stimulation to increase milk supply for most women.

Hand-held battery-operated pumps are most useful for mothers with an established milk supply who only need to pump once or twice per day.

Pros:

- May be operated with one hand.
- No muscle required.
- Lightweight.
- Relatively inexpensive.

Cons:

- Batteries must be changed after every 2 to 4 hours of use.
- Not enough stimulation to increase milk supply for most women.

Hand or manual expression works well for women who need to express milk just once or twice per day.

Pros:

- No batteries or electricity needed.
- No equipment to buy.
- All that is needed is a clean container to collect milk (such as a large bowl) and bottles to store it.

Cons:

- It can be difficult to learn how to do efficiently.

If you need help, contact your local Health Education Department or watch the hand expression video listed in the Additional Resources section. Many Kaiser Permanente facilities rent and/or sell breast pumps. For more information, call your local Health Education Department.

How do I store my breast milk once I have pumped?

Once it has been expressed, breast milk can be stored in containers for future use. Of course you should always use containers that have been washed in hot, soapy water and have been rinsed well.

To store your milk:

- Use glass or hard plastic bottles with tight-fitting lids, or plastic milk storage bags made specifically for storing and freezing breast milk. Disposable bottle liners are **not** a good way to store breast milk.
- Cool each batch of milk in the fridge, and then freeze it for later use. (No need to freeze milk if you're planning on using it within 5 days.)
- Store milk in small amounts (2 to 4 ounces) to limit waste.
- Label the container with the date the milk was pumped. When using your stored milk, use the oldest milk first.
- Do not add fresh milk directly to a container of frozen milk. You may add milk that has been cooled in the refrigerator to a container of frozen milk.

For how long can I store my breast milk?

This depends on how you store it. Breast milk may be stored in the following ways for healthy (non-hospitalized) babies:

- At room temperature (66 to 72 °F) for 6 to 8 hours. In warm rooms (79 °F) for 3 to 4 hours.
- In a refrigerator (32 to 39 °F) for up to 5 days.
- In the freezer compartment inside a refrigerator for up to 2 weeks.
- In a freezer compartment with a separate door for 3 to 4 months.
- In a separate deep freeze or chest freezer for 6 months or more.

You can store thawed milk in a refrigerator for 24 hours before using it, or leave it at room temperature for 1 hour. Do not refreeze thawed breast milk.

How do I prepare the frozen milk to feed my baby?

To defrost frozen milk for feeding:

- Hold the container under warm running water, or
- Put it in a bowl of warm tap water. Slowly add more warm tap water around the container until the milk reaches room temperature.
- Test the temperature of the milk on the inside of your wrist.

If your baby doesn't finish all of the milk in a bottle, throw the leftover milk away. So you don't waste milk, put only as much milk as your baby is likely to drink in the bottle. Do not use the same bottle again without washing it first with hot, soapy water. Even small amounts of milk can cause bacteria to grow in the bottle.

Never microwave breast milk.

Microwaves don't heat evenly, so milk warmed in a microwave can produce "hot spots" in the milk that can burn your baby's mouth. Microwaves can also overheat the milk, which destroys nutrients.

Pumping takes practice.

Learning to pump your breast milk can take some practice and patience. Many mothers find that they need time and support to learn the art of expressing their milk. When you start, take a deep breath and try to relax. Look at a picture of your baby, hold or smell your baby's blanket, and pump in a quiet setting to help make milk expression easier and more efficient.

If you have any questions or concerns, contact your lactation consultant who will be glad to support you in all aspects of breastfeeding.

* * * *

Additional resources:

- Visit the La Leche League Foundation website at **lalecheleague.org** or call the 24-hour Breastfeeding Helpline: 1-877-4-LALECHE
- Visit your doctor's home page at **kp.org/mydoctor** to use online health tools, view your preventive health reminders, check most lab results, and much more.
- Websites for breastfeeding legislation for the workplace:
 - aap.org (search breastfeeding legislation)
 - llli.org/Law/LawUS.html
- Visit <http://newborns.stanford.edu/Breastfeeding/HandExpression.html> to learn about hand expression.
- Contact your Kaiser Permanente Health Education Center or Department for health information, programs, and other resources.
- You and your baby have the right to be safe. If you are hit, hurt, or threatened by a partner or spouse, this can seriously affect your health. There is help. Call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233 or connect to **ndvh.org**.

This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other health care professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have additional questions, please consult with your doctor.