

Expressed Breastmilk (EBM)

This fact sheet has information about how to express, store and transport EBM.

Breastmilk, including colostrum, is the best food for your baby. It helps your baby to be healthy and to fight infections. Your first milk is called colostrum.

Why express your breastmilk?

You may need to express if your baby is premature or sick, if your breasts are very full and uncomfortable, to increase your milk supply, or if you are going back to work and another carer needs to feed your baby. Keep practising if you find expressing hard work – your expressed breastmilk is important for your baby. Skin to skin contact and being relaxed may help your milk to let down which is when the milk starts to flow, and your supply to increase.

How to hand express:

Step 1: Wash your hands thoroughly

Step 2: Massage your breasts gently

Step 3: Put your thumb and index (forefinger) on each side of your nipple. Push backwards into your breast, then press your finger and thumb together.

Step 4: Express into a clean sterilised container which has a well-fitting lid. Using a small container will help to avoid wastage, especially if you will be freezing your EBM. **(For a premature or sick baby in hospital, use a sterile container provided by the hospital)**



To express using a breast pump:

- > Wash your hands thoroughly
- > Breast pumps can be hand, electric or battery operated. Set up the pump by following the manufacturer's instructions. You may find that your milk supply starts to let down easier if you massage your breasts gently or hand express for a short time before using the pump.



- > After using the pump, clean it thoroughly. Wash the expressing kit parts in warm soapy water, and rinse well. Put the parts onto a clean towel and let them air-dry. Store the parts in a clean container with a lid.
- > Every day, your expressing items must be sterilised. This is important to protect you and your baby against germs. You can boil them, use a microwave or soak them in a chemical solution. To boil your items, cover with cold water and then bring the water to the boil. Boil for 5 minutes and then let them cool. When they have cooled, take them out of the water, let them air-dry and store them in a clean container.



When to express:

If your baby is not able to breastfeed soon after birth, start expressing before your baby is **6 hours old**. Express at least **8 times per day**. This will help you to have a good milk supply.

It is important to **express overnight too**, to make as much milk as your baby needs.

Premature or unwell babies only need a small amount of milk at first, but for long term supply it is important to try to express 600-800mls in 24 hours, by day 10-14 after birth.

Storing, Transporting and Using your EBM:

Breastmilk needs to be stored safely. Put your EBM in the refrigerator or freezer as soon as you can after expressing. In the refrigerator, store EBM at the back where it is coldest – not in the door.

Table 2: Length of time breast milk can be stored

Breast milk status	Storage at room temperature (26°C or lower)	Storage in refrigerator (5°C or lower)	Storage in freezer
Freshly expressed into sterile container	6-8 hours If refrigeration is available store milk there	No more than 72 hours Store at back where it is coldest	2 weeks in freezer compartment inside refrigerator (-15°C) 3 months in freezer section of refrigerator with separate door (minus 18°C) 6-12 months in deep freeze ((minus 20°C)
Previously frozen (thawed)	4 hours or less- that is the next feeding	24 hours	Do not refreeze
Thawed outside refrigerator in warm water	For completion of feeding	4 hours or until next feeding	Do not refreeze
Infant has begun feeding	Only for completion of feeding Discard after feed	Discard	Discard

SA Health Expressed Breast Milk and Administration in SA Clinical Directive Version 1.0 2018

You can transport your milk if it is fresh or frozen. If you are bringing your breastmilk to the hospital or going out, use a cooler bag or esky filled with ice bricks or gel ice packs. Keep it as cold as you can, and put it into the refrigerator or freezer as soon as you arrive at your destination. If frozen EBM has thawed during transport, it must be used within 24 hours.

- > Thaw frozen EBM slowly in the refrigerator or by standing the container in warm water.
 - o If thawed in the refrigerator, it will keep for 24 hours.
 - o If thawed in warm water, it must be used within 4 hours, or stored in the refrigerator for no more than 24 hours.
- > Do not refreeze thawed EBM.
- > To use your breastmilk, it can be warmed by standing the container in warm water.
- > **Do not use a microwave to warm breastmilk** – This can heat the milk unevenly and can burn your baby.

For more help or information:

- > Phone Child and Family Health Service on 1300 733 606 or the Parent Helpline on 1300 364 100, or visit the website on www.cyh.com.
- > Phone the Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA) Breastfeeding Helpline: 1800 686 268 (1800 mum 2 mum) 24 hours, 7 days a week.
- > Ask your Child and Family Health Nurse, Midwife or Lactation Consultant.

For more information:

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