

# Flexible Breastfeeding Strategies

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PUMPING, STORAGE AND RETURNING TO WORK





# Table of Contents

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Getting Started: When to  
Start Pumping ..... 4

Introduction of Alternative  
Feeding Method ..... 5

Warming the Milk ..... 6

Paced Bottle Feeding ..... 6

Storage ..... 8

CDC Milk Storage Guidelines  
for the Healthy Infant ..... 10

Cleaning Pump Parts ..... 11

Returning to Work ..... 12







Some mothers who are returning to work or would like someone else to feed the baby can express their milk either by hand or with a breast pump. If you'd like to use an alternative feeding method, other than breastfeeding, most people think about bottle feeding; if your baby is older, you could also introduce a cup and skip giving bottles at this point.

Other family members also like to feed the baby, dad or grandma for example. This may be a good time for mom to take a long shower, or spend some one-on-one time with an older child.



## GETTING STARTED: WHEN TO START PUMPING

When your baby is 2 weeks of age it's a good time to start pumping milk to store on a regular basis if you'll be returning to work. Sometimes there are medical indications for moms to start pumping sooner. Talk to a lactation consultant anytime you want to decrease or increase pumping. Before expressing and collecting breastmilk, wash hands carefully and ensure you have clean equipment.

- Breastfeed at every feeding and pump immediately after one or two feedings each day for your milk storage. Try to pump as soon as you can, within 15-20 minutes, after breastfeeding. If you wait longer, you may not have enough milk ready for when your baby wakes.
- Pumping after the first morning feeding will give you the highest yield. Don't pump two consecutive feedings. Expect small amounts from pumping after breastfeeding; it may take several pumps to accumulate enough breastmilk for a full feeding. After three to seven days of expression at approximately the same time every day, milk amounts will likely increase.
- If freshly expressed milk is not likely to be used within four days, label with date and freeze.

## INTRODUCTION OF ALTERNATIVE FEEDING METHOD

If you're interested in giving your baby a bottle of expressed breastmilk, this should be started after breastfeeding is well established. Typically this is when baby is three to four weeks old. Waiting until your baby is older may result in bottle refusal.

- Most breastfed babies up to 6 months old drink milk in three-to four-ounce servings. Some babies will take a bit more or a bit less. For the first few bottles, two-and-a-half to three ounces (75-90 ml) of expressed breastmilk is a good starting point. After you learn what your baby likes to eat, you can adjust accordingly.
- It's unlikely that a breastfed baby will consume an eight-ounce bottle regardless of their age. Breastmilk changes as your baby ages to meet their needs.
- Someone other than mom should give the first bottles. Mom shouldn't be in the room since the baby may refuse the bottle if they know mom's available.
- After baby has accepted and emptied the bottle, mom should pump to empty her breasts. Mom should never skip feedings, as leaving milk in the breasts may decrease supply.
- The first several bottles you introduce should be of stored milk and mom should pump after the bottle is given. After your baby has taken bottles easily for a while, mom can just pump and the fresh milk can be given.
- It's very important to continue to give bottles every one to two days to ensure your baby doesn't start refusing the bottle.
- After the milk has been heated and baby has partially eaten a bottle of expressed breastmilk, the remaining milk should be discarded within a couple hours. There have been no studies done on the safety of saving and reusing breastmilk.

## WARMING THE MILK

- Breastmilk doesn't need to be warmed. Some babies will take it at room temperature or cold.
- Milk will separate into layers in the refrigerator. Gently swirl (don't shake) to mix the layers before feeding your baby.
- Keep the bottle well sealed, if warming, and don't let the water level go above the rim. You may warm the milk by putting it in a pot of warm water or running warm water over the container for few minutes. You can also use a bottle warmer.
- Don't warm the milk on the stove.
- **NEVER** microwave the milk.
- Test the temperature of the milk on your wrist before the feeding. It should be warm, not hot (about body temperature).

## PACED BOTTLE FEEDING

- To give a bottle, a slow-paced method is best.
- Continue to feed on cue.
- Select a slow-flow nipple. Check with a lactation consultant for any recommendations. Frequently bottles say they're "slow flow" but they're not.
- Hold the baby close, upright and slightly reclined. Don't lay baby down or on their back.
- Hold the bottle straight away from the baby with the nipple brushing their lips and the nipple just filling with breastmilk.
- Touch the bottle nipple to baby's mouth.
- Encourage your baby to take it into their mouth until they have a wide gape.
- The feeding should take 15-30 minutes.
- If your baby drinks too fast, is gulping milk or seems tense, tip the bottle down to slow the flow of the milk. They should pause occasionally on their own and take a breath.
- Follow your baby's lead to decide how much to feed. Don't force the baby to empty the bottle. Toward the end of the feeding pull the bottle from your baby's mouth but leave it resting on the lower lip. If they are still hungry they'll search and ask for the nipple. Do this every few minutes so the baby won't overeat. Eventually they'll signal that they have had enough by no longer searching for the bottle nipple.





## STORAGE OF EXPRESSED BREAST MILK

- After expressing milk, it can be placed in a variety of food-safe containers. Glass bottles, hard plastic, (BPA free), Ziploc® freezer bags, or breastmilk storage freezer bags may be used. If you use bags, consider storing in a plastic tub in the freezer to keep it organized. Don't use regular sandwich bags as these are thin and tend to break. Don't use bottles with the recycle symbol number 7. These may contain BPA. Each method has its own advantages for storage.
- Breastmilk may vary in color depending on mom's diet but it shouldn't have a bad odor. After you have a small amount of breastmilk frozen, take out enough for a feeding. After the milk has thawed, smell the milk. If it has a sour or rancid smell, and your baby won't take the milk, call the Breastfeeding Clinic. You'll want to do this soon so you don't have a freezer full of milk that you can't use.
- Containers shouldn't be filled to the top. Allow one inch at the top of the container for milk expansion as it freezes.
- Label expressed milk with a date. If milk will be taken to a day care setting, also label with baby's name.
- Consider storing some milk in smaller one- to two-ounce portions for unexpected situations when a full feeding may not be necessary. Any milk left in the bottle after the feeding is completed needs to be discarded within a couple hours. Storing some smaller portions can prevent waste of your breastmilk.
- Use the freshest refrigerated milk first, and then begin using the oldest frozen milk. Over time, the quality of stored milk can decrease. Some of the good fats and antimicrobial factors are diminished during the freezing process.
- Expressed breastmilk from multiple pumping sessions may be combined if they're the same temperature. Freshly expressed milk must be refrigerated. After the milk has cooled it can be combined with a previously pumped container of milk. This usually takes one or two hours in the refrigerator. Don't add fresh milk to frozen milk.
- Store breastmilk in the back of the refrigerator or freezer, not in the front or in the door, to keep the milk at a constant temperature.
- Frozen milk can be thawed overnight in the refrigerator or on the counter just until ice crystals melt. Keep it in the refrigerator until the feeding. For best nutritional value, a slow thaw is best.



- Breastmilk can be quickly thawed in a bowl of warm water (temperature <98° F or 37°C). Keep the water level below the lid to prevent water from entering the milk container.
- Don't mix breastmilk and formula at the same feeding. If you're supplementing after breastfeeding use breastmilk if you have enough, or formula if you don't. Mixing breastmilk and formula has been known to decrease the anti-infective properties of breastmilk.
- Breastmilk may be stored in the refrigerator for 24 hours after thawing. Thawed milk should be used within 24 hours or discarded.
- **NEVER** refreeze breastmilk.
- Cleanliness affects storage duration due to bacterial growth. Keep your pumping equipment as clean as possible.

MILK STORAGE GUIDELINES FOR THE HEALTHY INFANT

- Freshly pumped breastmilk can be stored in an insulated cooler bag with frozen ice packs for up to 24 hours when you’re traveling. Once you arrive at your destination, milk should be used right away, or stored in the refrigerator, or frozen. Don’t let your milk sit directly in melting/watery ice.

These guidelines are for healthy full-term babies and may vary for premature or sick babies. Check with your health care provider. Guidelines are for home use only and not for hospital use.

	Countertop or Table	Refrigerator	Freezer with separate door
Storage Temperatures	77° F or colder (25° C)	40° F or colder (4° C)	0° F or colder (-18° C)
Freshly Pumped/ Expressed Milk	Up to 4 hours	Up to 4 days	Within 6 months is best, up to 12 months is acceptable
Thawed Milk	1-2 hours	Up to 1 day (24 hours)	Never refreeze milk after it has been thawed

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## CLEANING A BREAST PUMP

- After pumping, wash your hands. Use a separate basin or bowl to wash your pump parts; don't wash in a sink. Separate all the pump parts and rinse each pump part with lukewarm water. Wash each piece separately using liquid dish soap. Rinse each piece thoroughly with hot water (10-15 seconds). Allow to air dry; don't dry with towels because they can harbor bacteria that can contaminate your milk.
- All pump parts that come in contact with milk or your skin should be washed after every use. Some pump parts can be washed in the top rack of the dishwasher. Check your instruction manual for your specific breast pump. Don't wash the tubing if there's condensation (small drops or a fog) turn the pump on for a few minutes until the tubing is dry.
- After washing your pump parts you may want to sanitize them. This can be done in the top rack of your dishwasher or a microwave steam bag; you may also boil in water for five minutes. Again, please consult the specific instructions for cleaning your pump as the instructions differ from brand to brand.
- Keep the pump clean by wiping with a paper towel or cloth. Multiple-user pumps should be cleaned between each user.
- Pump wipes can be used but the pump parts should be washed with soap and water prior to reusing. They're not a method of cleaning.
- Rinse the wash basins and brush well; allow them to air-dry after each use. Wash them every few days, either in a dishwasher with hot water and a heated drying cycle (if they're dishwasher-safe), or by hand with soap and warm water.



## RETURNING TO WORK

Hopefully, by the time you're returning to work you have 30-60 ounces of milk stored in the freezer. Your employer should provide you with a clean private space, not a bathroom, and time to pump while you're at work. If you're providing breastmilk to your baby, this benefits your employer as your baby will be sick less and you'll need to call in less often.

- Try to pump after your first morning breastfeeding before you go to work.
- Pump at work as often as your baby would normally be breastfeeding.
- It's better to pump early rather than skip a pumping or stretch out the time between pumps.
- When baby starts sleeping longer at night it can be good to pump before you go to bed.
- Anticipate your supply to fluctuate with your menstrual cycle when it returns.
- Consider pumping on your way to work if you have a long commute. Use a hands free pumping bra and a battery-operated pump or a car adapter. If desired, you can cover the parts with a nursing cover or large scarf.
- Store your pumped milk in the refrigerator or in a cooler with frozen ice/gel packs. Refrigerate as soon as you arrive at home.
- Anticipate using refrigerated milk first as this is nutritionally best and the oldest frozen milk second. Typically your baby will be fed tomorrow what you pumped at work today.
- Consider purchasing a spare set of pump parts for back up. Occasionally, depending on the brand, they may not be readily available for purchase close to your home.
- Continue to breastfeed when you and your baby are together.
- You may have to pump 20-30 minutes to completely empty your breasts while at work.



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