

Womens and Children's Hospital

Managing expressed breast milk (EBM) at home

This fact sheet provides you with information on how to safely express, store and transport your breast milk for healthy term babies. Speak to your midwife or lactation consultant for more information on **how** to express your breast milk. If you are expressing for a premature or unwell baby, refer to the Expressed Breast Milk (EBM) for premature or unwell babies' fact sheet.

You may need to express your breast milk for many reasons, some of these include:

- > You or your baby are in hospital (see fact sheet referred to above).
- > You plan an outing and another care giver will need to give your baby a feed.
- > You return to work or study.
- > Your breasts are engorged and uncomfortable or you have mastitis.

How to express breast milk safely

- > Wash your hands thoroughly before expressing or handling breast milk or equipment.
- > Express into a clean sterilised container. Containers should have well fitting lids. Glass or hard plastic containers are ideal or specifically designed breast milk bags.
- > Using small containers may help avoid wastage especially if freezing EBM.

How to store your EBM

- > Breast milk needs to be stored safely, which means at the right temperature for the right amount of time.
- > Label your breast milk with the date you expressed when storing so you can use the oldest milk first and know when it's past its safe date.
- > If you cannot store your breast milk, use it within 6-8 hours of expressing. However, whenever possible, it is safest to refrigerate your milk immediately.
- > EBM is safe at room temperature (<26°C) for 6-8 hours for healthy term babies, extra caution needs to be taken in hot weather.
- > Store breast milk in the back of the refrigerator where it is coldest – not in the door.
- > Breast milk stored in the refrigerator is best used within 48 hours but will keep for 3-5 days if necessary.
- > Frozen breast milk is safe for 3 months if it is frozen at -18°C.

Thawing and warming frozen EBM

- > Thaw milk slowly in the refrigerator or more quickly in warm water, not in the microwave
 - If thawed in the refrigerator, it will keep for 24 hours
 - If it is thawed in warm water, use it straight away or put in the back of the refrigerator for no more than 4 hours
 - Do not re freeze thawed EBM

Warming EBM

- > Stand container of breast milk in a larger container of warm water or hold it under warm running water
- > It is not recommended to microwave EBM as this can create uneven heating and can burn your baby.

How to transport your EBM

- > Breast milk can be transported fresh or frozen
- > Use an insulated container with a freezer brick when transporting
- > If EBM remains frozen, put in freezer on arrival
- > If EBM has thawed place in refrigerator and use within 24 hours, do not re freeze
- > If EBM has never been frozen, you can either store in refrigerator or freeze

Quick tips for expressing breast milk

Keep a good supply of milk if possible – see a lactation consultant if you are having trouble. Start expressing as soon as possible after birth. Newborn babies only need a small amount of milk at first, but for long-term supply it is important to try to express 600-800ml in 24 hours by day 10-14 after birth. This may mean expressing 8-12 times in a 24 hour period in the first 14 days. Skin to skin contact and being relaxed may help with increasing breastmilk supply.

More information

The Child and Family Health Service (CaFHS)

Your local CaFHS offer breastfeeding clinics. Call 1300 733 606 to make an appointment

Visit www.cyh.com

The Women's and Children's Hospital Expressed Breastmilk booklet

http://www.cyh.com/library/Expressed_Breastmilk_Booklet.pdf

The Women's and Children's Hospital Breastfeeding Unit

Telephone (08) 81617971 during office hours to make an appointment

Australia Breastfeeding Association (ABA) Breastfeeding Helpline

Telephone 1800 686 268 (24 hours, 7 days a week)

Visit www.breastfeeding.asn.au

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