Breast Milk Collection and Storage

Collecting Breast Milk

* First, wash hands well.
* Wash breast pump equipment that connects the breast, milk or collection containers in a dishwasher or by hand in hot, soapy water. Rinse with cold water and air dry on a clean towel.
* When to pump depends on you and your baby’s schedule. Try to pump when the baby would normally feed. Or after you have fed baby at the breast for approximately 10 mins.
* Your milk supply is usually most plentiful in the morning. If your baby skips a feeding or nurses for a shorter time than usual or only nurses on one side, pump out the rest of the milk and save it.
* Never purposely skip a feed, remember to feed your baby on demand and pump off what baby does not take in.
* Before pumping, get comfortably seated and relaxed. Have a picture of the baby, or have something that smells like the baby or have a snuggle with the baby before hand if possible to stimulate the hormones needed for milk production and let down.

Storage

There are several containers available for storing breast milk. These include specially designed plastic bags, plastic bottles or glass containers. There are advantages to each.

1. If you are going to freeze your breast milk, leave some space at the top of the container. Breast milk, like most liquids, expands as it freezes.
2. When using plastic bags, use those designed for breast milk collection. Place smaller bags in a larger bag to help protect against punctures or leaking.
3. Mark the date and amount on each container. It is recommended that feed baby stored milk at the same time of day as the milk was pumped.
4. Freeze your milk in two to four ounce portions. Smaller amounts thaw quicker and you will waste less milk if your baby consumes less than you anticipated.
5. If you are only pumping small amounts of milk at a time you can continue to add milk to the same container throughout the day but make sure you are chilling the fresh milk before adding to the refrigerated stored milk. Then freeze when you have the appropriate amount. Never add warm milk to cold milk.

There are various options regarding the time breastmilk can be stored. St Michaels recommends:

Room Temperature 4-8 hours

Refrigerator 72 hours

Refrigerator Freezer (at the back) 3 months

Deep Freezer 6-8 months

Defrosting:

Place milk in refrigerator the night before you’re going to use it. Refrigerator defrosting can take 12 hours

OR place the milk under warm running water or in a pan of warm water. Don’t use hot water as this can destroy some of the milks important nutrients.

NEVER MICROWAVE BREAST MILK! Microwaving breast milk can change the milks composition, and has the potential to burn your baby’s mouth and throat.

Fat in breastmilk will separate and rise to the top. By gently swirling the container, you can mix any fat that may have separated. NEVER REFREEZE thawed breast milk. DISCARD any breastmilk you don’t use during a feeding.