Breast milk storage chart

How long expressed breast milk stays good, for healthy, full-term babies at home (CDC guidelines).

Type of milk	Where it's kept	How long it's good for
Freshly expressed	Room temperature, 77°F (25°C) or colder	Up to 4 hours
Freshly expressed	Insulated cooler with frozen ice packs	Up to 24 hours (then use, refrigerate or freeze)
Freshly expressed	Fridge, 40°F (4°C) or colder	Up to 4 days
Freshly expressed	Freezer, 0°F (-18°C) or colder	Within 6 months is best, up to 12 months is acceptable
Freshly expressed	Deep (chest or upright) freezer, -4°F (-20°C)	Same CDC limit: best within 6 months, up to 12 months
Thawed, previously frozen	Room temperature	1–2 hours
Thawed, previously frozen	Fridge	Up to 24 hours from when it is fully thawed
Thawed, previously frozen	Freezer	Never refreeze thawed milk
Leftover from a feed	Any	Use within 2 hours after your baby finishes, then discard

Good to know

- Count from when the milk was expressed, or from when it was fully thawed.
- Label every container with the date. Keep milk at the back of the fridge or freezer, not in the door.
- Never refreeze thawed milk. Use leftover milk within 2 hours after the feed, then throw it away.
- Premature, sick or hospitalized baby? Follow the storage rules from your baby's care team.

Sources: CDC: Breast Milk Storage and Preparation; CDC: Breast Milk Storage Questions and Answers; CDC: Human Milk Storage Guidelines (printable chart, PDF); HealthyChildren.org (AAP): Storing and Preparing Expressed Breast Milk; La Leche League International: Storing Human Milk.

Updated October 12, 2026. General information, not medical advice: ask your pediatrician or an IBCLC about your baby.