

# Pumping and Storing Breast Milk

You may need to express or pump breast milk to relieve engorgement, to increase your milk supply or to feed your baby breast milk with a bottle.

## Why and When to Pump

- **To soften your breasts** if your baby is having trouble latching on.
  - ▶ Pump for a few minutes and try your baby at your breast again.
- **To have a milk supply** when your baby is unable to breastfeed or to store breast milk.
  - ▶ Pump every 2 to 4 hours through the day and one time at night.
- **To increase your milk supply.**
  - ▶ Pump every 2 to 3 hours if you are not breastfeeding, or
  - ▶ Pump between feedings as often as you can.
  - ▶ Pump on the second breast if your baby only nurses on one side.
- **To prepare to return to work or school.**
  - ▶ Pump one time each day, between feedings to store extra milk. Morning is a good time to pump.
  - ▶ Pump extra milk and store it at least 2 weeks before your return date.
  - ▶ Pump at least every 4 hours when away.

## Ways to Express Breast Milk

- By hand
  - ▶ Massage breast toward nipple to express milk.
- With a pump
  - ▶ There are manual and electric breast pumps.
  - ▶ Pump for about 10 minutes on each breast any time you pump.

## Getting Started

- Wash your hands with soap and water.
- Have a clean container ready for collecting the milk.
- Find a relaxing position in a quiet spot and think about your baby.
- Massage your breast and take slow easy breaths.
- For privacy while pumping, cover your breasts and pump container with a blanket or towel.

## Collecting and Storing Breast Milk

- Use sterile glass bottles, plastic bottles or milk storage bags made for breast milk. **Do not** use disposable bottle liners because they are too thin.
- Store breast milk in 2 to 5 ounce portions to avoid wasting breast milk.
- Breast milk from different pumpings can be added together if the milk is pumped during the same 24-hour day.
- Breast milk should be chilled as soon as possible after it is pumped.
- It is normal for pumped milk to vary in color and thickness.
- Stored milk separates into layers. Cream will rise to the top as the milk warms. Mix the milk layers before feeding.
- If you are not going to use the breast milk within 48 hours after pumping, freeze the milk.
- Always use freshly pumped milk first. Then use refrigerated or frozen milk by the oldest date first.
- If breast milk has a sour or strange smell, throw it away. If there is any doubt, **do not** use the milk.

## Handling Fresh Breast Milk

- If you washed your hands well before pumping, fresh milk may remain at room temperature (no warmer than 77°F or 25°C) for use in 4 to 8 hours. If you are not going to use it, store it in the refrigerator as soon as possible.

- Refrigerate milk right away if the room, car or outside air temperature is above 77°F or 25°C. When you are away from home, use a lunch box size cooler with an ice pack to keep milk cool.

## **Breast Milk Storage**

These guidelines are for a full-term, healthy baby. You may be given different guidelines to follow.

- **Fresh**
  - ▶ Store at room temperature (no warmer than 77°F or 25°C) for 4 to 8 hours. If the temperature is higher, cool the milk right away.
  - ▶ The milk can be stored in the refrigerator (32 to 39°F or 0 to 3.9°C) for 5 to 7 days.
- **Frozen**
  - ▶ Frozen milk can be stored for 3 months in the refrigerator freezer and 6 months in a deep freezer (0°F or -17.8°C).
  - ▶ Once thawed, frozen milk can be stored in the refrigerator for 24 hours.

## **Thawing Frozen Breast Milk**

- Thaw frozen milk in a cup of warm water. This takes 5 to 10 minutes.
- You can also thaw frozen milk 8 to 12 hours or overnight in the refrigerator.
- Thawed milk can remain refrigerated but should be used within 24 hours.
- **Do not** thaw breast milk by sitting it on the counter at room temperature.
- **Do not** warm breast milk in a microwave oven. It can change the breast milk and reduce the quality of the milk. Microwave ovens heat the milk unevenly to cause a chance of burning your baby's mouth.
- **Do not** refreeze thawed milk.

## **Warming Breast Milk**

- Remove the milk from the refrigerator just before using.
- Warm the milk by holding the container under **warm** running tap water or sit it in a bowl of warm water for 5 to 10 minutes.
- Rotate the bottle gently and test the warmth of the milk by placing a drop on the inside of your wrist before feeding your baby.
- Milk left over in the container after a feeding may be offered at the next feeding before discarding. Do not reheat milk that has been heated. Breast milk can safely stand at room temperature for 4 to 8 hours.
- **Do not** warm breast milk by sitting it on the counter at room temperature.
- **Do not** warm breast milk in a microwave oven. It can change the breast milk and reduce the quality of the milk. Microwave ovens heat the milk unevenly to cause a chance of burning your baby's mouth.

**Talk to your baby's doctor or nurse if you have any questions or concerns.**