

Power Failure and Frozen Expressed Breastmilk

The Breastfeeding Coalition of Washington, 2006

Breastmilk Stored in a Freezer

If you have stored pumped breastmilk in your freezer or refrigerator and want to know if it is salvageable, use these guidelines;

- If frozen breastmilk is slushy or has any 'ice crystals' continue to store it in the freezer. It is still considered frozen.
- If the milk is totally liquid, it is considered defrosted and should be kept cool and used within 24 hours and not refrozen.

Source: Univ. of WA Med. Ctr; Lactation Dept., 2006; Human Milk Banking Assoc. of North America, Best Practice, 2005.

Other Tips and Information

- If using someone else's freezer while your power is out, be sure to label your breastmilk with your name, date and contact information.
- Avoid opening your freezer. Keep breastmilk in the middle of your freezer, away from the walls of the freezer. Items in the center will stay frozen longer.
- Contact your refrigerator/freezer manufacturer to find out how your particular make and brand works during a power outage.
- Don't be concerned if your milk smells "soapy" once it is thawed. This smell is attributed to changes in the milk fats.
- To warm thawed breastmilk before feeding your baby, place in warm water. If warm water is not available, place bag/container of breastmilk in your bra, under your arm, or somehow next to your skin to bring to body temperature. Never microwave breastmilk.
- If you are breastfeeding, continue to do so. If you are breastfeeding and bottle-feeding, breastfeed as much as possible in place of bottle-feeding (especially if no access to hot water for washing).
- If using formula, it must be refrigerated and used within 24 hours. If no refrigeration is available, mix the formula each time your baby needs to eat and discard the leftover.
- Twenty-five pounds of dry ice will keep a 10 cubic foot freezer (upright or chest-style) below freezing for three to four days. Be sure to wear heavy, dry gloves when handling dry ice to avoid injury. Keep dry ice away from children. Never transport a cooler of dry ice in a car because it gives off carbon dioxide.
- Freezer/Cooler/Ice chest tips: Make sure the door/lid remains tightly closed during the outage. Routinely (before an outage) fill any unused space with crumpled paper or bottles/empty milk cartons filled with water. Place blankets over the freezer/cooler/ice chest to help keep cold. Chest-style freezers stay cooler longer than upright models.

If your baby is hospitalized, check with your care provider for more guidance.

Breastpumps

- If you rely on an electric breastpump for expression don't forget you can express manually as well. For techniques on how to do this: http://www.breastfeeding.com/helpme/helpme_images_expression.html
- If you don't have access to the Internet, call a Lactation Consultant who can walk you through this.
- Some electric breastpumps can be converted to manual or have an adapter for use with a car battery.

Breastmilk Storage Guidelines

Room temperature (at 60° for 24 hrs; 66° for 10 hrs; 79° 4-6 hrs)	
Refrigerator; fresh milk (32°-39° F or 0°-4° C)	Up to 8 days maximum
Refrigerator; thawed milk (32°-39° F or 0°-4° C)	24 hours
Freezer compartment inside refrigerator	2 weeks
Freezer compartment above, below or next to refrigerator	3-6 months
Deep freezer less than 0° F	6-12 months
Insulated cooler / ice packs (60° F or 15° C)	24 hours

For lactation information and referral; contact the **Family Health Hotline: 1.800.322.2588.**

www.withinreachwa.org