Collecting and Storing Breastmilk
For Your Breastfed Baby

These guidelines are for families with healthy, full term babies. If you have a preemie or are expressing milk for a sick child, please talk to your health care provider.

Handling Breastmilk Safely

- Always wash your hands first.
- Make sure all pump parts are clean.
- Use clean containers that seal tightly and are intended to hold breast milk.
- Breast milk is safe and sterile but can be contaminated if it comes in contact with bacteria from your hands or pump parts.

When Collecting Breastmilk

- Fill bags and bottles in feeding size portions, usually about 2 to 3 ounces.
- The average pumping session yields 1 1/2 to 2 ounces total. This is not a reflection of milk production or how much your baby is getting.
- Even the best breastpumps can only express 1/3 to 1/2 of what your baby can get while nursing.
- Leave space in the container if freezing as the liquid will expand.
- Date all bottles and bags. Always use the oldest milk first.
- Put your baby’s name on all bottles if they are going to daycare.
- Clean pump after each use.

WIC is an equal opportunity provider.
Guidelines for Storing Breastmilk
From the Centers for Disease Control (CDC)

- Room temperature up to 77 degrees: **6 to 8 hours**
- Insulated cooler bag with frozen ice packs: **24 hours**
- Refrigerator: **5 days**
- Refrigerator freezer: **3 to 6 months**
- Deep freezer: **6 to 12 months**
- Always store milk in the back of the fridge or freezer where the temperature is more consistent. Never in the front or the door.
- If you are unable to pump enough milk for a full feeding at each expression, you may add small amounts of chilled milk to a single container over the course of the day.

Thawing Breastmilk

- Thaw only the amount of breastmilk needed for a feeding.
- It is best to thaw breastmilk in the refrigerator overnight but it will thaw out quickly in a bowl of cool water.
- To warm breastmilk, run warm water from the tap over the bottle or bag or set it in a pan or bowl of warm water. **Never** boil or microwave breastmilk.
- Shake or rotate the container before feeding breastmilk to your baby. This will help to mix the fat layer that separates during storage.
- Use the thawed breastmilk within 24 hours of thawing and warming if it is refrigerated or within one hour if it is at room temperature.
- Throw out any breastmilk left in your baby’s bottle at the end of a feeding. Bacteria in your baby’s mouth can make milk unsafe to drink.
- **Never** refreeze thawed breastmilk.

Please call the 24 hour hotline at (406) 539-1741 with any questions or concerns.