Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

How To Express and Store Your Breast or Chest Milk While You're in the Hospital

This information explains how to express and store your breast or chest milk at MSK.

Expressing your milk means emptying milk from your breast or chest. You can do this by pumping (using a breast pump) or hand expressing (using your hand).

What to do before you go to the hospital

If you're having a surgery or procedure, read *Getting Ready for Your Surgery or Procedure While You're Breastfeeding or Lactating* (www.mskcc.org/pe/surgery-procedure-breastfeeding).

Talk with your care team

Talk with your care team if you're breast or chest feeding or lactating (your body is making milk). Tell them if you want to continue after your hospital stay. If you do, they'll help you keep your milk supply throughout your care.

Store a supply of your milk

Try to store a backup supply of milk before you're admitted to the hospital. This will help make sure your baby can drink your milk even when you're not together.

Ask about your medicines

Talk with your care team about the types of medicine you'll get in the hospital. Most medicine is safe to take while you're breast or chest feeding. But there are some that can affect your breast or chest milk.

If you're taking a medicine that affects your milk, your care team will give you instructions. Different medicines stay in your body for different lengths of time. You may need to throw out your milk until the medicine leaves your body and no longer affects your milk. Or, you may need to store your milk for some time before giving it to your child.

If you have questions, ask your care team. You can also find information through these resources.

Infant Risk Center
www.infantrisk.com
806-352-2519
Infant Risk Center offers information about taking medicine during pregnancy and breast or chest feeding.

LactMed Drug and Lactation Database
www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK501922
LactMed gives information about medicine and chemicals that can be passed on to your baby from breast or chest milk.

Talk with your child's doctor

Tell your child's doctor that you'll be in the hospital. Tell them you may need anesthesia (medicine to make you sleep) or other medicine. They can help you plan your child's care, if needed.

How to keep your milk supply while you're at the hospital

The best way to keep your milk supply is to pump or hand express your milk while you're at the hospital. This will also prevent pain and engorgement. Engorgement is when your breasts or chest overfill with milk and become firm and swollen.

- **If you're having a surgery or procedure**: Plan to pump or hand express your milk right before your surgery or procedure. You can do this in the presurgical center before going into the operating room. Remember to read *Getting Ready for Your Surgery or Procedure While You're Breastfeeding or Lactating* (www.mskcc.org/pe/surgery-procedure-breastfeeding).
- **If you're staying in the hospital overnight or for a few days**: Plan to pump or hand express your milk throughout your hospital stay. It's best to do this on the same schedule you usually feed your child. This will help you keep your milk supply steady.

Your child may be able to visit you in the hospital for breast or chest feedings. If you want to do this, your care team needs to help plan it. Talk with them before you come to the hospital.

Pumping at MSK

Tell your nurse you'll need to pump

Once you're in the hospital, tell your nurse you're lactating and plan to pump or hand express your milk. Your nurse will make sure this is documented in your medical chart. They'll also help you get the supplies you will need to store your milk at MSK.

You may move to a new room or location during your hospital stay. Tell the nurse there that you're lactating and plan to pump or hand express your milk.

Bring your own pump and supplies

We encourage you to bring your own pumping supplies while you're in the hospital.

Remember to bring:

- Your own breast pump with its power source.
- All the supplies you need for expressing your milk.
- Milk storage containers.
- A cooler bag with ice packs to store your pumped milk.

A technician will check your breast pump to make sure it's safe to use in the hospital. This is often done at your bedside. Sometimes, they may need to take the pump away for a moment to check it.

Using an MSK pump

Your personal breast pump may stop working or have a problem. If so, you can use one of our portable Medela Symphony® electric breast pumps. Ask your care team for more information. We have pumps at these MSK locations:

- **Memorial Hospital (MSK's main hospital)**
  1275 York Ave. (between East 67th and East 68th streets)
  New York, NY 10065
- **David H. Koch Center for Cancer Care**
  530 East 74th St.
  New York, NY 10021
- **Josie Robertson Surgery Center**
  1133 York Ave.
  New York, NY 10065

Cleaning your pump supplies

Wash your pump supplies after each use

After you pump, wash all your pump supplies that touch your milk or skin. This includes any collection containers and flanges (the piece of the pump that goes over your nipple). Washing them helps get rid of any germs or bacteria.

Ask your care team for a wash basin or container and dish soap. Wash your supplies with hot water and soap in the basin in your bathroom sink. Rinse them with warm water. Let all the pieces air dry. Do not wash or wet the tubing. Ask your care team for help, if needed.

Sanitize your pump supplies once a day

Once a day, sanitize the pump supplies that touch your milk or skin. This helps get rid of any germs and bacteria that may be on your supplies. Ask your child's healthcare provider for a Quick Clean™ Microwave bag.

To use the Quick Clean™ Microwave bag:

1. Place your washed pump supplies, except for the tubing, in the microwave bag.
2. Add 2 ounces of water to the bag. Use a collection bottle to measure 2 ounces.
3. Ask a staff member to help you find the microwave. Place the bag in the microwave for 3 minutes on high.
4. Take the bag out of the microwave. Be careful not to burn yourself. The bag may be hot.
5. Over a sink, open the steam vent on the side of the bag. Drain the water and dry your supplies with a paper towel.

Ask your care team for help if needed.

Storing your milk

You may be staying in the hospital for more than 24 hours (1 day). If so, try to have a family member or friend bring your milk home each day. When they bring your milk home, they should give it to your child right away. Or, they can store it in the refrigerator or freeze it.

If you must store your milk at the hospital overnight, store it in an insulated cooler bag with ice packs. Keep the ice packs on the milk containers at all times. Open the cooler bag as little as possible to help the milk stay cold.

Do not store your milk in the pantry refrigerator.

Storing your milk in the MSK human milk refrigerator

If you cannot send your milk home each day, you can store it in an MSK human milk refrigerator. You can store it in this refrigerator for up to 3 days. This refrigerator is locked and managed by nursing staff.

Your milk cannot stay in the MSK human milk refrigerator for longer than 3 days. If you're in the hospital for longer than 3 days, have a friend or family member take it home. Any milk that's not sent home after 3 days will be thrown away.

Use the "Milk storage log" at the end of this resource to keep track of how long your milk is stored.
You can store your milk at one of these MSK locations:

- **Memorial Hospital (MSK's main hospital)**
  1275 York Ave. (between East 67th and East 68th streets)
  New York, NY 10065
- **David H. Koch Center for Cancer Care**
  530 East 74th St.
  New York, NY 10021
- **Josie Robertson Surgery Center**
  1133 York Ave.
  New York, NY 10065

Put your milk in MSK storage bottles

You'll need to pour your milk into an MSK storage bottle to store it in an MSK human milk refrigerator. Ask your nurse for these storage bottles.

Your milk can stay at room temperature for up to 4 hours before it's sent to the refrigerator.

Before it goes to the refrigerator, your nurse will check with you that:

1. Your milk is in the MSK storage bottles.
2. Each bottle is labeled with your patient ID sticker. Write the date, time, and your initials on the sticker. This tells us the day you pumped or hand expressed it.

Before leaving the hospital

Ask your nurse to get your stored milk for you before you leave the hospital. Any milk you leave behind will be thrown away.

You can store your milk in an insulated cooler bag with ice packs for up to 24 hours. Keep the ice packs on the milk containers at all times. Open the cooler bag as little as possible to help the milk stay cold.

Once you bring your milk home, use it right away, store it in the refrigerator, or freeze it.

To learn more about how to safely store your breast milk at home or for travel, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website at www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/breast-milk-preparation-and-storage/handling-...

Milk storage log

Write down when you store your milk so you know when to bring it home.

Remember, your milk cannot stay at MSK for longer than 3 days. **Any milk you leave behind after you leave the hospital will be thrown away.**

Date you stored your milk	Where it's stored (cooler bag or refrigerator)	Bring it home by

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

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