Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

How To Feed Your Child Breast or Chest Milk While They're in the Hospital

This information explains how to feed your child breast or chest milk while they’re in the hospital. It also explains how to store your milk at MSK.

What to do before your child is admitted to the hospital

Talk with your child’s care team

Talk with your child’s care team about your feeding plan for your child when they’re in the hospital. This resource gives you an overview of your options. Your child’s care team will answer any questions you have.

Ask about your medicine

Talk with your care team about the types of medicine you’re taking. 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.

Feeding your child while they're at MSK

When your child is in the hospital, you can feed them breast or chest milk by:

- Breast or chest feeding your child directly.
- Expressing your milk at the hospital and feeding it to your child. 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).
- Expressing your milk at home and bringing it to the hospital. You can bring it in a cooler with ice packs. Your child's care team can feed it to them when you're not at the hospital.

You may need to express your milk if your child can't eat. This may be because they are sick, getting treatment, or having a test done.

Plan to breast or chest feed or express your milk on the same schedule you usually feed your child. This will help keep your milk supply steady.

Expressing your milk at home

You can bring your pumped or hand expressed milk from home. If you do, keep it in an insulated cooler bag with ice packs while you travel to the hospital. Ask your child's nurse to store it right away. Or, you can feed it to your child when you arrive at the hospital.

Read the section "Storing your milk at MSK" to learn how your milk will be stored

at the hospital.

Expressing your milk at MSK

Tell your child's care team you will need to express your milk

Tell your child's care team you plan to pump or hand express your milk at MSK. They will make sure this is documented in your child's medical chart. They will also help you get the supplies you need to store your milk at MSK.

Bring your own pump

We encourage you to use your own pumping supplies while your child is 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 breast or chest 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 child's 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. You can use it on the inpatient pediatric unit while you're visiting your child. 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 germs and bacteria.

Ask your child's 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.

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 child's care team for help if needed.

Storing your milk at MSK

Storing your milk in the MSK human milk refrigerator

You can store your milk in the MSK human milk refrigerator for up to 3 days. This refrigerator is locked and managed by nursing staff. Tell your child's nurse that you would like to store your milk. They'll bring it to the MSK human milk refrigerator for you. **Do not store your milk in the pantry refrigerator.**

Your milk cannot stay in the MSK human milk refrigerator for longer than 3 days. If you have milk stored for longer than 3 days, have someone 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.

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 child's 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 child's nurse will check with you that:

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

Storing your milk in the MSK human milk freezer

If your child will be in the hospital for longer than 3 days, you may need to freeze milk. If so, you can store it in the MSK human milk freezer.

- Freezer space is limited. If the freezer is full, you'll need to send your milk home to freeze. Talk with your care team before bringing in frozen milk.
- If you're bringing frozen milk from home, pack it tightly into an insulated cooler without ice.

- Do not let your frozen milk start to defrost.
    - If your milk starts to thaw but is it still half frozen (about half of it has ice crystals), it can be refrozen.
    - If it is fully thawed, it cannot be refrozen. It needs to be placed in the refrigerator and used within 24 hours. If your child is still not eating, this milk may need to be thrown away.

Type of milk	Length of time it can be stored
Frozen milk	6 months
Milk left over from a feeding	1 hour
Frozen milk thawed to room temperature	2 hours
Frozen milk thawed in a refrigerator	24 hours

Feeding your child your milk

If you plan to breast or chest feed, talk with your child's care team. They'll tell you if you can feed your child at any time or if there are any restrictions.

You may be planning to feed your child with a bottle. If so, their nurse will show you how to use a bottle warmer to warm the milk. Do not use a microwave or put the bottle in water to warm it up. Once the milk is warmed, feed it to your child within 1 hour. Any leftover milk will be thrown away.

If you plan to feed your child milk through a feeding tube, your child's nurse will set up the feedings.

If your milk is frozen, you can thaw it in a milk warmer. If you must thaw it right away, ask your child's nurse for help.

The milk must be placed in a plastic bag first so that the label does not get wet. You'll warm the milk in a bowl or container with warm water.

Once the milk is fully thawed to room temperature, feed it to your child within 2 hours. After 2 hours, throw the milk away. It can start to grow bacteria and is not safe to feed to your child.

Before your child leaves the hospital

Ask your child's nurse to get your stored milk for you before your child leaves the hospital. If you leave milk behind, we'll throw it away.

Your milk can be stored 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 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:

- Milk cannot be stored in MSK's human milk refrigerator for longer than 3 days.
- Milk cannot be stored in MSK's human milk storage freezer for longer than 6 months.
- **We must throw away any milk left behind after your child leaves the hospital.**

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

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

How To Feed Your Child Breast or Chest Milk While They're in the Hospital - Last updated on October 21, 2024
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