

## Q&A: Baby Falling Asleep While Nursing?

### IS IT OKAY THAT MY NEWBORN FALLS ASLEEP WHEN BREASTFEEDING? SHOULD I TRY TO KEEP HER AWAKE?

If she's falling asleep once she's full and satisfied, that's fine. However, if she is having trouble staying awake to eat for at least 10 to 15 minutes, you'll need to try a few tactics to wake her.

A baby falling asleep early in feedings can be a sign of a shallow latch, which causes a milk flow so slow that baby quickly loses interest. The solution is to latch baby on deeper.

If baby's latch is good and she's just plain sleepy, skin-on-skin contact can sometimes help; remove your top and bra as well as your baby's clothes (but leave the diaper on), and lay her on your chest. This may stimulate her enough to keep her nursing. Other moms swear by tickling their babies' feet, stroking their legs, or jiggling their arms and legs to keep them awake and sucking.

Some experts recommend a strategy called "switch nursing" — when baby starts nodding off, take her off the breast, stimulate her (hold her upright, talk to her, tickle her, rub her, burp her), and offer the other breast. Repeat this scenario until she's logged at least a good 10 to 15 minutes of feeding.

Another strategy is to try [breast compressions](#), a tactic popularized by Canadian pediatrician Jack Newman.

## The Dos and Don'ts of Breast Milk Storage

### YOU'VE WORKED HARD TO COLLECT THAT MILK, SO DON'T WASTE A DROP! HERE'S HOW TO STORE BREAST MILK SAFELY IN THE FRIDGE AND FREEZER.

Whether you're heading back to work or just looking to have bottles on hand, pumping is a great way to stock up on breast milk. But how should you go about storing breast milk? What container you use, where you place it, what temperature you keep it at and how long you store it can all impact how safe and nutritious your milk is for baby. Being smart about breast milk storage is no doubt a science—but don't worry, we've made it easy. Read on to learn how best to preserve the fruits of your labor.

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## **BREAST MILK STORAGE GUIDELINES AT A GLANCE**

Breast milk is like liquid gold, so it's understandable to want to make use of every ounce you pump. Which brings us to the million dollar question: How long is breast milk good for? When storing breast milk, keeping it fresh is key. To properly store breast milk and protect it from spoiling, check out The Bump chart of breast milk storage guidelines below, which explains the details of how to store breast milk, including how long and at what temperature.

Keep in mind that this guide, based on information from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#), should be used only for healthy, full-term infants. Talk to your pediatrician about storing breast milk for premature infants, since these babies have much more sensitive immune systems.

## Breastmilk Storage Guidelines

Type of Breastmilk	Counter (77° F or colder)	Refrigerator (40° F)	Freezer (0° F or colder)
Freshly pumped	Up to 4 hours	Up to 4 days	Up to 6 months is best Up to 12 months is okay
Thawed	Up to 2 hours	Up to 1 day	Never freeze breast milk that's already been thawed
Leftover from a feeding	Use within 2 hours of baby's last feeding		

Source: CDC

the **BUMP**

Here are some important breast milk storage tips to always keep in mind:

- **On the counter:** Store breast milk in the coolest place you can find, away from direct sunlight. Don't store breast milk for any amount of time at temps higher than 77° F due to the risk of bacteria growth.
- **In a cooler bag:** You can safely store breast milk in a cooler for up to 24 hours. Keep ice packs on the milk container at all times, and don't open the cooler bag until you absolutely have to.
- **In the fridge:** Store breast milk in the center of the fridge, as far back as possible. Don't store it in the fridge door, where temperatures vary widely.
- **In the freezer:** Store breast milk in the back of the freezer, where temperatures are more consistent. Place it in sealed containers or breast milk storage bags, and always use the oldest milk first.

### HOW TO STORE BREAST MILK: THE DETAILS

When it comes to storing breast milk, remember this simple rule: Use the fridge for short-term breast milk storage and the freezer for long-term storage. Breast milk will stay fresh for many months in the freezer, as long as it's stored properly, but it won't be as nutritious for baby as the fresh stuff, since freezing breast milk kills off some of its natural vitamins, including important antioxidants. Refrigerated breast milk retains its nutritional quality better than frozen (though it will spoil more quickly), and the only thing better is freshly pumped milk. Still, there are merits to storing breast milk in the freezer or the fridge. Read on for the 411 on freezing breast milk vs. storing breast milk in the fridge.

## How to store breast milk in the fridge

If you're planning to use your expressed milk pretty soon, keep it in the refrigerator so you don't have to worry about thawing it. But how long can breast milk stay in the fridge? The refrigerator should be thought of as a short-term breast milk storage solution: It's best to use refrigerated breast milk within 24 hours, though properly stored milk can last as long as four days. Here's the scoop on how to store breast milk in the fridge:

- **Start with the right container.** When storing breast milk, use a clean container, such as screw-cap bottles, hard plastic cups with tight caps or heavy-duty [breast milk storage bags](#). "Make sure the bags aren't filled past the measurement indicator line, seal the bag tightly and place in a food storage container to keep it away from meats [and other uncooked foods to avoid contamination]," says Tamara Hawkins, FNP, RN, IBCLC, director of [Stork & Cradle](#), a lactation consultancy in New York City. What's not recommended are regular plastic storage bags, since they can easily leak or spill.
- **Location, location, location.** The real estate you carve out for breast milk storage matters, especially in the refrigerator. Always place freshly pumped milk in the back of the fridge, since this is the coldest area. The door, where temperatures fluctuate every time it's opened or closed, is the worst place for storing breast milk in the fridge.
- **It's okay to mix milk from several pumping sessions.** Sometimes you just don't get enough milk from a single pumping session, leading many moms to wonder: Can you add fresh breast milk to refrigerated breast milk? Answer: Yes, it's okay to combine pumped milk from several sessions, with a caveat: Always chill the new milk before adding to the old. "When you mix milks that are two different temperatures—for example, combining a bottle in the fridge with freshly pumped milk and then putting it back in the fridge—the cold milk will get warmer, then colder again, and then rewarmed when given to baby," says Regina Eichenberger, PA-C, IBCLC, a board-certified lactation consultant in Stratford, CT. A better idea is to combine the milks once they've both been sitting in the fridge for a few hours. If you won't be using the milk immediately, label it using the date of the older milk and move it to the freezer. Note that it's never safe to add fresh breast milk to frozen breast milk. "The fresh milk, since it's warmer, may actually thaw some of the frozen milk, which may lead to storing spoiled milk," says Nancy Clark, IBCLC, director of [Northern Virginia Lactation Consultants](#) in Gainesville, VA.

- **Don't reheat already-warmed milk.** "Breast milk should be warmed only once," Eichenberger says. "Rewarming breast milk more than once increases the risk of bacteria growth." Your best bet? Serve any unused milk at the very next feeding, and serve it chilled rather than rewarming it.

## How to freeze breast milk

As you start to build up a stash, you'll need to claim some real estate in the freezer for breast milk storage. Especially if you don't think you'll use your freshly pumped breast milk within four days, freezing breast milk is a smart way to better preserve the nutrients. So how long does breast milk last in the freezer? According to CDC guidelines, breast milk can be stored in the freezer for up to a maximum of 12 months, although it's best to use the milk within 6 months. Here are some important tips for freezing breast milk to ensure it stays safe for baby:

- **Consider your container.** Like fridge storage, knowing how to freeze breast milk starts with using the right container. For long-term breast milk freezer storage, use a glass or BPA-free plastic container that seals tightly and is freezer-grade. That can include glass jars with screw caps or hard plastic containers with snap tops. Breast milk storage bags can be used for freezer storage but won't keep milk protected for as long as sealed containers. "The bag may leak or spill and can become contaminated more easily than a hard container," Hawkins says. Leave an inch of space at the top, since breast milk expands when frozen.

- **Store milk in small batches and label it clearly.** Just like any food, once breast milk is thawed, it can't be refrozen. To avoid wasting unused milk, store milk in small batches of 2 to 4 ounces and label with the date. It's easy to heat up more milk if baby is still hungry, but keep in mind that if baby only drinks part of a bottle of thawed milk, you can only store the remaining milk for about an hour or two in the fridge before discarding, and it should never be rewarmed.

- **Store where the temperature is most constant.** "Be smart about where you place the milk. In the back center of the freezer, temperatures will be the coldest and most constant," Eichenberger says. "Avoid putting milk in the freezer door. Since the door is constantly being opened and closed, the temperature is more likely to be variable."

## HOW TO THAW FROZEN BREAST MILK

After freezing breast milk, you've got to reheat it once you're ready to use it. Wondering how to thaw frozen breast milk? We've got you covered.

There are several ways to go about defrosting breast milk, and the microwave isn't one of them. "Doing so can kill all the breast milk's living immune properties and create hot spots that can potentially burn baby's mouth or throat," Hawkins says. The best way to thaw frozen breast milk is to leave it in the refrigerator overnight. "If a rush defrost is needed, place the container of breast milk in a bowl of warm water, making sure the water doesn't rise above the rim of the bottle," Hawkins says. Admittedly, defrosting frozen breast milk can be time consuming, so plan ahead and always keep some breast milk in the fridge to have on hand.

Wondering how to store thawed breast milk? If you're not feeding baby immediately, keep it in the fridge. If you thawed it at room temperature, the milk is good for up to two hours (after that, throw it out); if you thawed it in the fridge, it can be used for up to 24 hours.

## HOW TO WARM BREAST MILK

The last thing you want to do when baby is howling to be fed is wait for milk to warm up—but it's quicker than you think! Gently swirl (if it's in a bottle) or massage (if it's in a bag) the milk while you hold it under warm, running water for several minutes. You can also fill a bowl with warm water and let the milk heat up. Just be sure to use warm water, not hot, so the milk doesn't overheat. Another option for how to warm breast milk is to use a bottle warmer. Again, stay away from the microwave—the uneven heating could easily scald a baby or damage the milk, Clark says. Regardless of the method you choose, always make sure the milk is just the right temperature for baby; test a drop on the inside of your forearm—it should feel warm, not hot.

## HOW TO TELL WHEN BREAST MILK HAS GONE BAD

As eager as you may be to use up all your pumped breast milk, you also want to be sure the milk you feed baby is fresh and safe to drink. So how can you spot spoiled breast milk? There are a few simple ways.

First, examine its appearance. When chilled, your breast milk will naturally separate into layers, with the fat rising to the top. The milk should easily mix after you swirl it around; if you still see separated clumps, it could be a sign your milk has gone bad. "You'll know if the milk is absolutely bad because it'll appear stringy, mucousy or will look as though there's pus in the milk," Hawkins explains.

You can also give the milk in question a smell. Spoiled milk will have that rancid, foul odor that's hard to mistake, similar to cow's milk that's past its prime. Still not sure? Perhaps the easiest way to detect spoiled breast milk is to taste it, Hawkins adds. Spoiled breast milk will have that unmistakable sour taste.

## Lipase in breast milk

Occasionally, mother nature throws us a curveball. Some moms may detect a sour or soapy smell from their breast milk after its been stored in the fridge or freezer—but it doesn't mean the milk has gone bad, Hawkins says. It could simply be a sign that your milk has high levels of lipase, an enzyme that helps baby easily digest the fat in your breast milk and absorb essential fatty acids like DHA.

Having a lot of lipase in breast milk isn't necessarily a problem. "Many babies are unbothered by this," Hawkins says. "They drink the milk without any hesitation and there's nothing to worry about. The milk is still good." But other babies might not appreciate the odor and refuse to drink your milk after its been stored. Take heart! Scalding or heating freshly pumped milk to a high temperature can tamp down on the lipase activity and get rid of that sour or soapy smell.

When scalding breast milk, place it on the stove (never the microwave) and keep a careful eye on it—you don't want the milk to reach a boil, Hawkins cautions. Instead, you're aiming to heat the milk to 144 F for one minute. You can use a food thermometer to know when you've reached the right temp, or simply keep the milk over heat until you spot small bubbles rising along the edges of the pan. Once the milk is ready, take the pan off the stove and sit it in a bowl of ice water to cool down rapidly. You can then store your cooled milk as you would normally.

*Updated August 2018*

# Baby Growth Chart

## EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT TRACKING BABY'S GROWTH.

As every cheek-pinching grandmother knows, a growing baby is a healthy baby. But how do you know if your child's growth is on track? Enter the baby growth chart, the major tool your pediatrician uses to plot baby's physical development—including weight, length and head circumference—at every wellness checkup. The baby growth chart may look intimidating, with its dots and curves and height and [weight percentiles](#), but it's easy to decipher with a little background and the help of your doctor. Here's what you really need to know about tracking baby's growth.

### In this article:

[How does a baby growth chart work?](#)

[Baby boy growth chart](#)

[Baby girl growth chart](#)

[What if baby is above/below standard baby growth chart?](#)

## HOW BABY GROWTH CHARTS AND GROWTH CURVE WORK

Those [curves](#) you see on a baby growth chart reflect average growth—in weight, length and head circumference—for boys and girls based on their age. At the wellness checkups, the doctor will weigh and measure baby (before age 2, the doctor will stretch baby out on the exam table to measure length), then add a dot to the graph to plot your child's latest gains. The curve is just those dots connected over time.

## How often is baby's growth measured?

Doctors will whip out the measuring tape and place baby on a scale at every checkup, which means at birth, after 3 to 5 days and at months 1, 2, 4, 6, 9, 12, 15, 18, 24 and 30, then annually after that. The main thing your doctor is looking for is consistency. "Do I care about the absolute number on the chart? No, I don't," says pediatrician Charles Shubin, MD, director of the Children's Health Center at Mercy FamilyCare in Maryland and associate professor of pediatrics at the University of Maryland and Johns Hopkins University. "What's important is the pattern of growth—how they're progressing."

Should you track baby's growth at home? The short answer: Don't bother. Dr. Shubin had one mother who measured her child every week and was proud to show off the hand-etched lines up and down the doorjamb. But this is entirely unnecessary, Shubin says.

"Children get measured at every checkup, on the same scale, in the same way, so we get the most accurate weight," says Karen E. Breach, MD, assistant specialty medical director of Carolinas HealthCare System in North Carolina. And if the doctors are the least bit concerned? "We'll schedule extra weigh-ins if we're worried," she says. "Seriously, the best way to monitor your child's growth is to come to the well checkups."

## What do height and weight percentiles mean?

Baby's height and weight chart percentile reflect how she compares with average babies—lower numbers mean she's on the smaller or lighter side, and higher numbers mean she's on the taller or heavier side. So if there are 100 babies and your child lands in the 40th percentile for height, that means that 39 babies are smaller and 59 babies are bigger. But keep in mind, it's not a contest. "Bigger isn't better and smaller isn't better," Breach says. "When parents ask why their child isn't in the 95th percentile, I remind them that it's not a score on a test." Instead, baby's growth will reflect your own family's stature and how much baby is eating—and it's more about the amount than whether baby is getting breastmilk or formula.

## What's a normal growth rate?

That's easy: "What's normal is what's normal for your child," Breach says. "It doesn't matter that your cousin's baby is bigger or that the neighbor's baby is smaller. What matters is if your baby is growing on his chart."

Normal growth means baby's measurements—height, weight and head circumference—are showing gains at every appointment. Whether boy or girl, breastfed or formula-fed, steady development is what's important. "If your baby is 25th percentile in weight and suddenly shoots up to the 95th percentile, I'm going to worry that he's being overfed," Breach says. "If he's been measuring in the 25th percentile and then suddenly he's down to the 3rd percentile, that could also be a problem." If baby is born preterm, doctors will use a gestational age adjustment to plot her numbers.

During the first two to three months, breastfed babies may gain weight more quickly than their formula-fed peers. That's likely because breastfed babies may eat more often—they're probably nursing on demand rather than by a schedule—and moms aren't measuring how much milk they're getting. "There are lots of reasons that breastfeeding is healthier, but there really isn't a big difference in growth rates," Breach says.

## BABY GROWTH CHARTS

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends using the World Health Organization's (WHO) growth chart for babies from birth to 24 months. The WHO chart, officially called [The WHO Child Growth Standards](#), was developed in 2006 based on optimal growth rates for mostly breastfed babies in the US and Europe. "It was initially used for breastfed babies, but it's really for all babies," Breach says.



After baby reaches 24 months, pediatricians may continue to use the WHO growth charts or switch to the [baby growth chart developed by the Centers For Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC) for ages 2 to 20. According to Breach, they're comparable after age 2.

### Baby boy growth chart

The following WHO baby boy growth chart outlines optimal growth measurements, including length, weight and head circumference, for babies 1 to 12 months.

WHO CHILD GROWTH STANDARDS FOR BOYS			
AGE	LENGTH	WEIGHT	HEAD CIRCUMFERENCE
1 MONTH	21.5 INCHES	9.9 POUNDS	14.6 INCHES
2 MONTHS	22.9 INCHES	12.3 POUNDS	15.4 INCHES
4 MONTHS	25.2 INCHES	15.4 POUNDS	16.3 INCHES
6 MONTHS	26.6 INCHES	17.6 POUNDS	17 INCHES
9 MONTHS	28.3 INCHES	19.8 POUNDS	17.7 INCHES
12 MONTHS	29.8 INCHES	21.2 POUNDS	18.1 INCHES

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### Baby girl growth chart

The WHO baby girl growth chart below describes ideal growth patterns for baby's length, weight and head circumference within the first year of life.

WHO CHILD GROWTH STANDARDS FOR GIRLS			
AGE	LENGTH	WEIGHT	HEAD CIRCUMFERENCE
1 MONTH	21.1 INCHES	9.4 POUNDS	14.4 INCHES
2 MONTHS	22.4 INCHES	11.3 POUNDS	15 INCHES
4 MONTHS	24.4 INCHES	14 POUNDS	15.9 INCHES
6 MONTHS	25.8 INCHES	16.1 POUNDS	16.5 INCHES
9 MONTHS	27.6 INCHES	18.1 POUNDS	17.3 INCHES
12 MONTHS	29.1 INCHES	19.8 POUNDS	17.7 INCHES

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## WHAT TO DO IF BABY IS ABOVE OR BELOW CHILD GROWTH STANDARDS

Your doctor is in the best position to track baby's growth, but definitely speak up if you're concerned. Here's how pediatricians are likely to address baby's position on the growth chart relative to the standard curve.

### **If baby is underweight**

"It's not the same as not growing," Shubin says. If baby is measuring on the low side for weight but is still growing well, there's probably no problem, especially if the family tends to be thin. If baby's weight is either significantly below average or baby is not growing well, doctors will look at whether baby is eating enough. "Typically, underweight infants who are otherwise healthy are usually just underfed," Breach says. If they're eating enough but still not gaining weight, doctors will look for an underlying medical condition such as celiac disease, a thyroid problem or cystic fibrosis.

### **If baby is overweight**

This is usually a simple case of overfeeding, especially with babies. Both Shubin and Breach are seeing more and more overweight babies—who are likely to grow into overweight adults. "My goal is never for them to lose weight but to gain weight at a slower pace as they grow," Breach says. "We don't put kids on a diet." Most babies slim down anyway as they get more mobile and start to sit up, pull up, roll, crawl and walk. Very rarely, too-rapid weight gain can be associated with health problems, such as an endocrine disorders. Talk to your doctor if you're concerned.

### **If baby is growing too quickly**

Just being tall isn't a cause for concern, especially if Mom and Dad are tall. "When a child is consistently above the growth curve, I always say, 'What do you think Shaquille O'Neal looked like at that age?'" Breach says. If baby is growing steadily and then makes a sudden jump, you may be referred to an endocrinologist.

### **If baby is growing too slowly**

Again, petite is not a problem (especially if it runs in the family), unless baby is not growing a minimum of one inch per year or if the growth curve is flat or dropping. In those cases doctors will likely test for fixable issues, such as growth hormone deficiencies or problems with absorbing nutrients (like celiac disease).

Ultimately, when it comes to tracking baby's growth, the pediatrician is on it. "I don't think any question is a silly question, but my key take-home message is: Don't try to manage this yourself," Breach says. "Children are models of their family, so big people have big children and small people have small children." Your job, she says, is to offer a healthy diet, and then just relax and enjoy time with baby.

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