



Bryan Neonatal Intensive Care Unit

Collecting, Labeling, Storing and Transporting Milk for NICU Babies

The nurses and doctors in the Bryan Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) depend on parents to help make sure that mothers' milk is carefully collected, labeled, stored and brought to the hospital for babies' feedings. This information sheet will answer the questions that parents ask most frequently. However, always check with your baby's nurse or a lactation consultant if you have any questions that are not answered in this sheet.

What are the most important things to know about these procedures?

Take care not to let germs get into your milk.

- Always wash your hands with soap and warm water before touching clean pump parts.
- Do not touch the inside of the storage container and lid.
- Do not cough or sneeze on your milk or the storage containers.
- Follow directions on the "Caring for your Breast Pump Equipment" information sheet for washing and sterilizing your milk expression equipment.

Write clearly on the milk label, and carefully stick the label on the storage container. Please do not place the sticker over the numbers on the bottle.

- The nurse will check the information on the label each time the milk is fed to be sure that your baby receives only your milk.
- The nurse must discard milk that does not have a label or if the identifying information on the label cannot be read.

Do not throw away your milk because you think you have made a mistake with any of these procedures. Always check with the nurse or lactation consultant first.

What containers do I use to store milk for my baby?

Your nurse or your baby's NICU nurse will provide you with special collection containers to store your milk. These containers are sterile and meet current hospital recommendations for food storage.

While your baby is in the NICU, please do not store your breast milk in storage bags. Always make sure that you have enough containers for an extra day or two—just in case you don't return to the NICU as soon as you plan. If you ever run out of the containers at home, contact the lactation consultants right away so that they can advise you about what to use in the meantime. *Do not throw away your milk if you run out of storage containers.*

What label do I use for my milk, and what do I write on it?

Your baby's nurse will give you milk labels with the storage containers.

- Write on the labels with a waterproof, fine-line marker (preferred) or a ballpoint pen. Do not use a felt-tip marker that is not waterproof, because the ink smears and the writing is hard to read.
- Write the date and time that the milk in the container was collected with the breast pump.

How should I store my milk until I can bring it to the NICU?

Milk can be stored in the refrigerator for 4 days from the time it is removed from your breasts until it must be fed to your baby. However, please freeze extra milk that will not be fed to your baby within 24 hours after you remove it with the breast pump. Milk can be stored in a freezer for several months, but once thawed, it must be fed within 24 hours.

How do I bring my milk to the NICU?

You can transport your milk in any type of insulated cooler that will keep it chilled while you travel. If you live a long distance, you may need to pack your milk with extra ice to prevent thawing.

The doctors and nurses prefer to keep all of your milk in one of the hospital freezers during the time that your baby is in the NICU. However, as your baby's hospital discharge approaches, you may be asked to keep extra milk at home.

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