Hindmilk Pumping

This handout explains what hindmilk and formilk are and why pumping is important for babies needing extra calories. It also lists supplies needed and explains correctly separating and storing the milk.

The lower fat and calorie milk in the start of the pumping session is called "**foremilk**." The higher fat and calorie milk at the end is called "**hindmilk**." In cases where the parent has an oversupply, and baby is needing a higher fat diet, pumping parents can separate the milk to give the baby just the hindmilk, and save the foremilk for another time. Foremilk is still very nutritious for babies, but in some cases, the hindmilk can optimize growing.

Hindmilk pumping is using separate bottles to collect the foremilk and the hindmilk. You will only feed your baby the hindmilk.

This may be an option for you if:

- Your healthcare team feels that your baby needs extra calories.
- You produce a lot of breastmilk (called "high supply" or "oversupply"). This is about 1 liter (33 ounces) of breastmilk per day.

Supplies Needed

- A breast pump
- Several storage bottles (depending on the size of the bottle and your milk supply)

Directions for Separating

1. Begin pumping. When your milk is flowing steadily for about two minutes (or as directed by your provider) turn off the pump. Label the container "foremilk," with the date and time.
2. Attach a separate container to the pump. Keep pumping until your milk flow stops. Pump for two more minutes (or as directed by your provider). Label the container "hindmilk," with the date and time.

How to Know if Hindmilk is Separated Correctly

When you are learning how to pump hindmilk, your baby's healthcare team will help make sure that it is working. There are three main ways to know that the milk has been separated correctly.

1. **Crematocrit testing.** The Milk Lab can take a sample of your hindmilk and test it to see if it is higher in calories than your normal breastmilk.

2. **Color of the milk.** Hindmilk will appear creamy and white. Foremilk will look clear and watery.

3. **Your baby's growth.** This is the best way to know if the feeding plan is working. Your baby's weight and length will be followed closely by their healthcare team.

Saving Foremilk

Your foremilk can be frozen and may be used later when your baby no longer needs extra calories. See storage guidelines.

Breastmilk Storage Guidelines

	Room Temperature	Fridge	Hospital or Home Stand Alone Freezer	Home Freezer Compartment or Fridge
	<79°F (26°C)	<39°F (4°C)	-4°F (-20°C)	0°F (-18°C)
Freshly Expressed	4 hours	4 days	6 to 12 months	3 to 6 months
Thawed	4 hours	24 hours	Never refreeze thawed breastmilk	Never refreeze thawed breastmilk

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 10/2026 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#8148.