

Information for breastfeeding military mothers

SHIPPING YOUR MILK



For long-term TDY's or deployments you may decide to pump and ship your milk back home to your caregiver. If you are PCSing you may have a large stash of breastmilk that you need to get safely from one duty station to the next, either within the States (driving) or from overseas (flying). Either way, it will require some pre-planning on your part. This handout will give you tips on how to get your precious breastmilk where it needs to go safely! (Thanks to **SFC Rose Ryon, US Army** for the information on shipping milk).

Supplies

Before any TDY or deployment you will need to stock up on some essential supplies. In addition to your double-electric breast pump (and all the items you normally pack for pumping at work), you may want to pack some of the following items that other military mothers have found useful when shipping milk:

- Milk storage bags – they take up less room and ship better
- Sharpie marker – to date your breastmilk
- Electric cooler – to keep your milk cold until you can ship it home
- Styrofoam or soft-sided coolers – for shipping milk (at least 2 or more, depending on how much you produce)
- Shipping box – large enough to hold the cooler(s)
- Shipping labels
- Packing tape
- Larger Ziploc bags – gallon size or larger
- Newspaper and/or brown lunch bags – for wrapping frozen milk
- Gloves – if you will be using dry ice

Packaging Your Milk

Taking the time to package your milk carefully will ensure that it gets to your caregiver, and ultimately to your baby, in perfect shape and ready to use.

Whether or not you use dry ice is your choice. Frozen breastmilk packed properly will generally stay frozen long enough to ship it overnight or second-day. The packing directions are basically the same (just omit the dry ice).

- Have all your supplies ready to go (shipping boxes, newspaper, labels, etc.).
- Begin by putting four bags of frozen milk into a lunch bag, and then wrap with another, forming a “milk pack.”
- Once you have them all wrapped in lunch bags, put a few of the milk packs in a Ziploc bag, creating packages of milk.
- Then either surround your block of dry ice with the packages of milk or line the cooler and layer the packages with newspaper.
- Fill any remaining space in the cooler with wadded up newspaper.
- Pack the coolers in the shipping box, secure it well with packing tape, and label.

Shipping

How many shipments you want to make depends on how much milk you are pumping, how much your baby is taking, and the expense of shipping. Shipping is expensive, especially for overnight or two day shipping, and the use of dry ice will make the package much heavier. There may also be a hazardous material fee for the dry ice. FedEx®, DHL® or UPS® are the main shipping carriers.

- FedEx – Call 1-800-GOFEDEX and press 81 for the Dangerous Goods/Hazardous Materials hotline.
- UPS – Air or ground shipments in US under 5.5 lbs require no special handling, over 5.5 lbs requires paperwork and a \$5 fee). International shipments also require paperwork and a fee. Call the UPS Hazardous Materials Support Center at 1-800-554-9964 for more information.
- DHL – has information [here](#) for shipping with dry ice.

If you plan to pump and ship your milk from overseas, you must check with any countries the milk will be transported through to be sure that it meets all customs regulations. Some countries do not allow human milk to be transported at all. You may be required to fill out paperwork from the USDA and/or IRS.

You will need to freeze your milk thoroughly and wrap in newspapers (dry ice will be very hard to come by overseas) and place it in a cooler, preferably hard-sided. Ship your milk with the fastest shipping speed possible. Mark the package carefully that it is fragile and perishable. Your caregiver on the receiving end should carefully check that the milk is still frozen and discard any milk that may have thawed or leaked.

Traveling

If you will be traveling with your frozen breastmilk, such as during a PCS move or returning from a TDY assignment, you may find yourself needing to drive across country with your milk, or trying to get your milk through airport security.

When driving with frozen breastmilk you have a few options:

- For small amounts and short distances, you can use a plug-in style cooler that uses the cigarette lighter adapter in your vehicle to keep the milk frozen while in transit.
- For larger amounts or long distances, you may want to invest in a larger cooler, or even a deep freezer, and dry ice.
- Make sure that your vehicle is well-ventilated if the cooler is in the passenger space (such as a van or SUV), due to the off-gassing (of carbon dioxide) that occurs as dry ice ‘melts’.

When flying home from overseas, what you decide to do depends on how much milk you need to bring back with you. If it is a lot you may want to package it as though you are going to ship it and check it as luggage. It will stay cold in the cargo hold of the airplane for up to 24-48 hours. If you will be hand-carrying it on board and keeping it with you in the cabin, you can put it in an insulated cooler, also using newspaper as added insulation, and it should stay cold for at least 12 hours. You can bring quantities greater than 3 ounces of breastmilk through security, with or without having your baby with you. TSA asks that you have the milk separated from your other belongings and understand that it may be inspected during the screening process.

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