

Human Milk Storage and Handling

Guidelines for Child Care Facilities

- A mother's expressed milk should only be used for her infant.
- Properly label each bottle with the child's name and the date/time the milk was expressed. Labels should be resistant to washing off. Milk should be refrigerated upon arrival.
- Defrost frozen milk in the refrigerator. Thawed milk may be briefly warmed in bottle warmers or under warm running water. Microwaves should never be used to thaw or warm human milk. Thaw and feed the oldest milk first.
- Breast milk should be gently swirled prior to feeding. Breast milk should not be shaken excessively, because this may damage some of its healthy components.
- It is not necessary to wear gloves when handling human milk unless blood is visible in the milk. However, it is important to always wash your hands before preparing any bottle to prevent the spread of germs.
- Unfinished bottles of human milk should be discarded after an hour.
- Return un-used milk to the child's parent/guardian, or discard, as indicated in the family's feeding plan.

Guidelines for Storage of Human Milk

Location	Temperature	Duration	Comments
Countertop, table	Room Temperature (up to 77°F or 25°C)	6-8 hours	Containers should be covered and kept as cool as possible; covering the container with a cool towel may keep milk cooler.
Insulated cooler bag	5°F–39°F or -15°C–4°C	24 hours	Keep ice packs in contact with milk containers at all times; limit opening cooler bag.
Refrigerator	39°F or 4°C	5 days	Store milk in the back of the main body of the refrigerator.
Freezer			
Freezer compartment of a refrigerator	5°F or -15°C	2 weeks	Store milk toward the back of the freezer, where temperature is most constant. Milk stored for longer durations in the ranges listed is safe, but some of the lipids in the milk undergo degradation resulting in lower quality.
Freezer compartment of refrigerator with separate doors	0°F or -18°C	3-6 months	
Chest or upright deep freezer	-4°F or -20°C	6-12 months	

The information provided in this handout is from: American Academy of Pediatrics, American Public Health Association, and National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education. 2010. *Preventing Childhood Obesity in Early Care and Education: Selected Standards from Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards; Guidelines for Early Care and Education Programs, 3rd Edition*. http://nrckids.org/CFOC3/PDFVersion/preventing_obesity.pdf



This information and project have been adapted from the "Breastfeeding-Friendly Child Care Initiative" of the Carolina Global Breastfeeding Institute /UNC Gillings School of Public Health and the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, *Ten Steps to Breastfeeding-Friendly Child Care Centers Resource Kit*.

This project is a collaboration between Our Lady of the Lake Children's Hospital, the Louisiana Breastfeeding Coalition, local breastfeeding coalitions, Volunteers of America/Partnerships in Child Care, and the Louisiana Office of Public Health-Maternal and Child Health Program.