

Preparing & Storing Breast Milk

Tips for Child Care Providers

► The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention classifies breast milk as a food, not a bodily fluid. Learn the proper methods for preparing, storing, and warming breast milk.

Breast Milk Storage Guidelines			
	Counter Top 77°F or Colder	Refrigerator 40°F	Freezer 0° or Colder
Freshly expressed milk	Up to 4 hours	Up to 4 days	Within 6 months is best; 12 months is acceptable.
Previously frozen, thawed in refrigerator, but not warmed	1 to 2 hours	24 hours	Never refreeze human milk after it has been thawed.
Leftover from a feeding (baby did not finish bottle)	Use within 2 hours after baby has finished feeding.		
* Use daily log sheets to monitor temperatures of refrigerators and freezers used to store human milk. Use an appropriate working thermometer.			

Breast Milk Preparation

- Always wash hands well with soap and warm water before preparing milk.
- Discuss milk temperature preferences when completing the feeding plan with family.
- Breast milk does not have to be warmed; it can be served at room temperature or cold.
- Heat breast milk only to normal body temperature, approximately 98.6°F.
- DO NOT warm or thaw breast milk in microwave or directly on the stove.
- Use the oldest milk first (first in, first out).
- Store milk in the back of the refrigerator or freezer, never in the door.



Frozen Milk

- Options for thawing frozen milk: (1) in the refrigerator overnight, (2) set in a container of warm or lukewarm (not hot) water, and (3) under lukewarm (not hot) running water
- Mix gently.
- Once breast milk is brought to room temperature or warmed after storing in the refrigerator or freezer, use within 2 hours.

Refrigerated Milk

- Warm breast milk by placing the container of breast milk in a separate bowl of warm water for a few minutes or by running warm (not hot) tap water over the container for a few minutes.
- Swirl the breast milk to mix the fat, which may have separated.