

## Care Provider's Information

### *Human Milk Storage Guidelines*

- Storing milk in 2-4 ounce amounts helps reduce waste.
- Be sure all containers are labeled with the baby's name, date the milk was expressed, and date it was frozen (if frozen).
- Refrigerated milk has more anti-infective properties than frozen milk.

Location	Temperature	Duration (optimal)	Comments
Room Temperature	60-85°F (16-29°C)	3-4 hours	6-8 hours acceptable under very clean conditions
Insulated cooler bag	≤ 59°F (15°C)	24 hours	Keep ice packs in contact with milk containers at all times, limit opening cooler bag.
Refrigerator	≤ 39°F (4°C)	3 days	5-8 days acceptable under very clean conditions
Freezer	≤ 0°F (-17°C)	6 months	12 months acceptable

Reference: [Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine protocol](#). Clinical Protocol Number #8: **Human Milk Storage Information for Home Use for Healthy Full Term Infants** (2010)  [PDF-68k]

#### Containers — refrigerated or frozen milk may be stored in:

- BPA-free plastic or glass containers with well-fitting tops.
- Freezer milk bags that are designed for storing human milk.
- Disposable bottle liners are not recommended.

#### Warming human milk:

- Thaw and/or heat under warm, running water.
- Do not bring temperature of milk to boiling point.
- Gently swirl milk before testing the temperature. Swirling will also redistribute the cream into the milk. (It is normal for stored milk to separate into a cream and milk layer.) Do not shake.
- Do not use a microwave oven to heat human milk.
- Discuss with the mother if she wants milk left in the bottle after a feeding saved and used for a later feeding.

#### Thawed (previously frozen) milk:

- If milk has been frozen and thawed, it can be kept in the refrigerator for up to 24 hours. It should not be refrozen. It is not known whether previously frozen milk that is left in the bottle after a feeding can be safely kept until the next feeding.

Research indicates that human milk has previously unrecognized properties that protect it from bacterial contamination. One study (1) found that there was no statistically significant difference between the bacterial levels of milk stored for 10 hours at room temperature and milk that had been refrigerated for 10 hours. Another study (2) found that after 8 days of refrigeration some of the milk actually had lower bacterial levels than it did on the day it was expressed.

Expressed milk can be kept in a common refrigerator at the workplace or in a day care center. The US Centers for Disease Control and the US Occupational Safety and Health Administration agree that human milk is not among the body fluids that require special handling or storage in a separate container.

- (1) Barger, J. and Bull, P. A comparison of the bacterial composition of breast milk stored at room temperature and stored in the refrigerator. *Intl J Childbirth Ed*, 1987: 2:29- 30.
- (2) Pardou, A. et al., Human milk banking: influence of storage processes and of bacterial contamination on some milk constituents. *Biol Neonate* 65:302 to 309, 1994.