

Preparing and Storing Breast Milk in your Home Child Care Program

The American Academy of Pediatrics says, "Breast milk is best for infants." Providing infants and mothers the opportunity in child care to continue breastfeeding, or to use breast milk in bottles, is important.

What do we need to know about preparing and storing breast milk in our child care programs?

Follow careful health and safety practices when preparing and storing breast milk. When you follow proper guidelines in preparing and storing breast milk in your child care program, you are supporting the infant's health and safety needs, as well as optimal nutrition benefits.

Here are three important steps:

1. **Talk with the mother about her breastfeeding ideas and goals.**
2. **Become familiar with any regulations or specifications needed.**
3. **Always properly wash hands before and after preparing or storing breast milk.**

Never warm breast milk in a microwave

The American Academy of Pediatrics Healthy Child Care: Model Childcare Health Policies recommends the following when handling breast milk:

Fresh breast milk:

- Expressed breast milk may be brought from home if frozen or kept cold during transit
- Fresh breast milk must be used within 48 hours
- Use freshly expressed breast milk first
- Keep refrigerators temperatures at 40 degrees Fahrenheit or below for storing breast milk

Frozen breast milk:

- Frozen breast milk may be kept in the freezer for up to three months
- Thaw frozen breast milk under running cold water or in the refrigerator
- Previously frozen, thawed breast milk must be used within 24 hours (kept in refrigerator until use)
- Keep freezer temperatures at 0 degrees Fahrenheit or below for storing frozen breast milk
- If you know you are going to need frozen milk, put it in the refrigerator to thaw; NEVER thaw or warm breast milk in a microwave
- Rotate frozen breast milk, using the oldest milk first

Preparing and storing breast milk:

- Ask parents to label bottles with their child's name and the date the milk was expressed
- Work out a labeling and storing system to make sure stored milk isn't switched with formula or an other mother's breast milk
- Although it is best to store breast milk in the refrigerator, freshly expressed milk can sit safely and hygienically at room temperature for up to 8 hours after expression.
- Any contents remaining in a feeding bottle after a feeding should be discarded
- To warm breast milk, place in a pan of warm water at a temperature not to exceed 120 degrees F for five minutes, gently swirl to mix, and temperature test before feeding
- Store milk in hard plastic bottles because they are unbreakable
- Never warm breast milk in a microwave
- Never shake breast milk to mix it
- Only use clean and disinfected bottles and nipples
- Check your freezer and refrigerator and be sure they are clean and working efficiently
- If using disposable nursing bags, throw out immediately after use