Preparation and Storing Breastmilk

Tips for Childcare Providers

It is important that you properly store and handle breastmilk to keep it from spoiling.

Follow these steps yourself when storing breastmilk:

Fresh Breastmilk (breastmilk that has never been frozen):
- Check that each container is labeled with the baby’s name and the date the breastmilk was pumped. Never accept a container without a label.
- Refrigerate breastmilk immediately. Never allow breastmilk to stand at room temperature.
- Throw out breastmilk that has been in the refrigerator for more than 3 days.

Frozen Breastmilk:
- Check that each container is labeled with the baby’s name and the date the breastmilk was pumped. Never accept a container without a label.
- Store frozen breastmilk in the back of the freezer. Never store breastmilk on the freezer door or in the front of the freezer.
- Keep frozen breastmilk in the freezer until it is needed for feeding. Never allow breastmilk to stand at room temperature.
- Throw out breastmilk that has been in the freezer for 3 months.

Ask mothers to follow these steps at home:

- Pump breastmilk into either a bottle or special breastmilk collection bag. Fill the container with the amount of breastmilk the baby usually drinks at one feeding.
- Label the container with:
  - Baby’s name
  - Date and time that the breastmilk was pumped
- Store the breastmilk in the refrigerator or freezer right after it is pumped.
- Bring containers of fresh or frozen breastmilk to the childcare center in a cooler with an ice pack to keep it cold.

Thawing frozen breastmilk

Tips for thawing frozen breastmilk:
- Never thaw breastmilk on the stove or in a microwave. Heating breastmilk in these ways destroys important nutrients that protect a baby’s health.
- Thawed breastmilk may be kept in the refrigerator for up to 24 hours.
- Never refreeze thawed breastmilk.

There are three different ways to thaw frozen breastmilk:

Method 1
Let breastmilk thaw in the refrigerator until you are ready to use it.

Method 2
Hold the container of breastmilk under warm running water until the milk thaws and reaches room temperature.

Method 3
Put the container of frozen breastmilk into warm water until the milk thaws and reaches room temperature.

Feeding tips

- Use oldest breastmilk first.
- Shake the bottle to mix the breastmilk.
- Follow the baby’s lead in the amount of breastmilk to feed. Stop feeding the baby when he or she loses interest.
- Throw away any breastmilk left in the bottle after the feeding.
- Send empty bottles home each day with parents for cleaning. Do not reuse bottles until they have been cleaned.

For more information call the HEALTH Information Line
1-800-942-7434

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