Figure 3

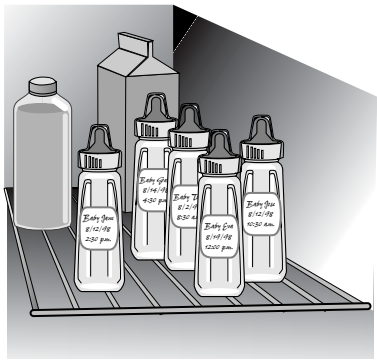
How to Store, Handle, and Feed Breastmilk

Breastmilk needs to be stored and handled safely to keep it from spoiling. Follow health and safety regulations required by your State and local authorities for safe food handling. Here are general tips for handling breastmilk:

Handling of Breastmilk Before Arriving at the Facility

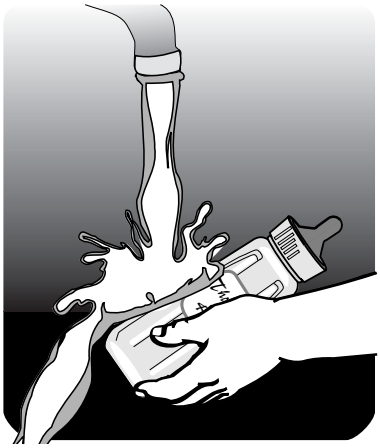
Ask mothers to:

- Store their breastmilk in the refrigerator or freezer right after they collect it and label the bottles with:
  —the baby's name, and
  —the date and time the breastmilk was collected.
- Store the milk in hard plastic bottles if possible because they do not break.
- Fill the bottles with the amount of breastmilk the baby usually drinks at one feeding. The mother can freeze some bottles with 1 to 2 ounces of breastmilk for times when the baby wants some extra breastmilk.
- Carry bottles of fresh or frozen breastmilk to the facility in a cooler with an ice pack to keep the milk at a cold temperature.



Handling and Storing Breastmilk at the Facility

- Breastmilk from a mother is designed specially to meet the needs of her baby. Make sure that each bottle is clearly labeled with the correct baby's or child's name. Never accept an unlabeled bottle from a parent.
- Refrigerate bottles immediately when they arrive and until ready to use.
- Use bottles of breastmilk only for the baby for whom they are intended.
- To prevent spoiling, do not allow bottles of breastmilk to stand at room temperature.
- Use refrigerated bottles of fresh breastmilk, kept at 40° Fahrenheit or below, within 48 hours from the time they were collected. Throw out unused breastmilk if not used within 48 hours.
- Breastmilk can be stored in a freezer (with a separate door from the refrigerator), for up to 3 months from when it was collected. Freezer temperature should be 0° Fahrenheit or below. If the freezer is not working or if there is a power failure, frozen milk may thaw out and become spoiled before 3 months. Rotate frozen breastmilk, using the oldest milk first.
- Protect breastmilk in an air-tight container (hard plastic bottle) while in the freezer. Once the breastmilk is removed from the freezer and thawed, refrigerate it at 40° Fahrenheit or below and use it within 24 hours; do not refreeze it.
- Do not save and reuse breastmilk leftover from bottles.
- Wash skin on which breastmilk has spilled with soap and water immediately.



Preparing and Using Stored Breastmilk for Feeding

- Wash your hands well (see Figure 10 on "Hand Washing Tips").
- Thaw a bottle of frozen breastmilk in the refrigerator or hold it under running cold water. Thaw only as much frozen breastmilk as you think a baby will need for a feeding.
- Do not thaw frozen breastmilk at room temperature, by heating on a stove, or in a microwave. Liquid may become very hot when microwaved even though the bottle feels cool. The hot liquid could seriously burn babies. Also, heating damages special substances in breastmilk that protect baby's health.

Figure 3 (continued)

How to Store, Handle, and Feed Breastmilk

- If breastmilk has a bad odor after thawing, it may have spoiled and should be thrown out.
- Once thawed, do not refreeze breastmilk.
- For those babies who prefer a warm bottle, hold the bottle under running warm (not hot) water immediately before feeding the baby. Warm only as much breastmilk as you think a baby will need for a feeding. Feed breastmilk immediately after warming.
- Shake the bottle of breastmilk before feeding because breastmilk separates into two layers when it is stored.
- Follow the baby's lead in the amount of breastmilk to feed. Feed the baby until he or she is no longer hungry.
- After a feeding, throw out any unused breastmilk left in a bottle and wash the bottle with soap and hot water immediately.
- Clean and sanitize bottles and their parts before reusing or filling with new expressed breastmilk (See Figure 4a, Steps 1-4 for more information). Throw out disposable nursing bags, if used, after each use.

IMPORTANT STEPS TO PREVENT BABIES OR CHILDREN FROM DRINKING ANOTHER CHILD'S BOTTLE OF EXPRESSED BREASTMILK:

- Make sure that parents clearly label each child's bottle of breastmilk with the child's name and date and time expressed. Only use a bottle labeled for the correct child.
- Never accept an unlabeled bottle from a parent.
- Do not use any unlabeled bottles that have been accidentally accepted.
- Do not leave any bottles of expressed breastmilk sitting around so that other babies or children could accidentally drink them.
- After a feeding, throw out any unused breastmilk left in a bottle and wash the bottle with soap and hot water immediately. Do not leave the bottle anywhere where other children can reach it.
- Do not let babies or children carry around bottles (or cups) of expressed breastmilk. If a child drops a bottle, pick it up immediately, place it out of reach of other children, and clean up any spilled breastmilk with soap and water.
- At the end of the day, send all bottles that contained expressed breastmilk home with the parent who brought the bottles. Never leave used bottles sitting around.
- If a child has been mistakenly fed or has drunk from another child's bottle of expressed breastmilk, follow the newest guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for steps to take (check CDC's web site at http://www.cdc.gov).

Recent guidance from CDC on safe handling of breastmilk is in: "*The ABCs of Safe and Healthy Child Care: A Handbook for Child Care Providers*," Department of Health and Human Services, U.S. Public Health Service, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1996. This publication can be downloaded through the above web site or obtained by writing to:

Office of Health Communication
National Center for Infectious Diseases
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Mailstop C-14
1600 Clifton Road
Atlanta, GA 30333