

Storage & Handling Guidelines

for Healthcare Providers



Mothers'
Milk Bank
of the Western
Great Lakes

- Ideal thawing method is in the refrigerator overnight or a warmer designed for this purpose.
- Milk is considered thawed when there are no ice crystals present. A container of milk should be completely thawed before preparing feeds.
- Fat may naturally separate during freeze-thaw cycles. Gently agitate the container to ensure the uniform distribution of fat and micronutrients.
- A unit bottle of donor milk may be used for multiple patients when clean technique is used to pour-off into individual feeding containers. The remaining milk can be stored in the refrigerator.
- Generally speaking, donor milk should be fortified using a calorie assumption of 20 cal/oz.

Milk Type	Refrigerator	Freezer	After Fortification	Room Temperature
Freshly expressed mom's milk	96 hours	12 months	24 hours or manufacturer's recommendation	4 hours*
Thawed, previously frozen mom's milk	48 hours	Do not refreeze	24 hours or manufacturer's recommendation	2 hours**
Donor milk	96 hours	Use expiration date on milk bank label	24 hours or manufacturer's recommendations	2 hours**

*Up to 8 hours is acceptable if room temperature is less than 25 degrees C

**Or longer to accommodate timed feeding (e.g. three hour feeding via NG tube)

Reference

Mannel, R. & Taylor, S. (2024). Best practice for expressing, storing and handling human milk: In hospitals, homes, and child care settings (5th Ed.). Fort Worth, TX: Human Milk Banking Association of North America.