

Recipient Guidelines for Milk Handling

Bloom Pediatrics and Lactation

While human milk has properties that protect against maternal skin pathogens, these factors may not be as effective when milk is exposed to bacteria from other sources. Please discard visibly damaged bags, as they may be contaminated.

Always wash and dry hands thoroughly before handling fresh, frozen or thawed milk. Lather hands with soap and water for 15 seconds, paying special attention to areas under your fingernails. Do this routinely before and after feedings and diaper changes. If using bar soap, use a rack to allow the bar to dry between uses.

Store milk in the rear or bottom of your refrigerator and freezer, where temperatures are coldest and most even. Milk remains safe and nutritious for up to 6 months in a refrigerator freezer and up to 12 months in a deep freezer. Each bag of milk you receive should be marked with two dates: date of donor's baby's birth (DOB) and date of milk collection (DOC). The DOC tells you how long ago the milk was pumped, so that you can be sure to use the oldest milk first. If you obtain fresh, refrigerated milk, use it within 4 days or freeze it. If you receive fresh milk, use this before frozen milk.

Sometimes frozen bags split and leak as they defrost, so we recommend placing bags in a clean empty container or new bag to defrost. This way you will save any leaked milk and prevent wastage. We recommend two ways to defrost frozen milk:

- Place the milk in the refrigerator the night before you plan to use it. Refrigerator defrosting takes about 12 hours. This causes the least amount of fat loss compared to thawing in warm water.
- Place the frozen milk in a warm water bath. Do not thaw the milk in boiling water.

Defrosted milk should be used within 24 hours. Thawed milk quickly loses its antimicrobial activity. **Never refreeze thawed milk.**

Never microwave breast milk. Microwaving breast milk can change the milk's composition and has the potential to burn your baby.

After thawing, you may notice a white, thicker milk on top and a more watery milk on bottom. Non-homogenized milk separates while sitting, and the cream rises to the top. Swirl or shake the container to mix the milk. You may also notice that the color, consistency and odor of breast milk vary. Variations occur due to diet, donor individuality, and time of day of pumping.

You do not have to warm breast milk, as infants often will take milk cold. It depends on your baby's preferences! Your infant usually knows best regarding how much milk is enough at each feeding. Trust your infant's cues! If you are just beginning supplementation and wonder how much milk to defrost, we offer the following general expected intake ranges:

Average intake by age (feeds ~ every 3 hours):

Birth to 7 days: 15 - 30 mL (½ to 1 oz) per feed

7-14 days: 30 - 60 mL (1 to 2 oz) per feed

2 - 3 weeks: 60 - 90 mL (2 - 3 oz) per feed

3 - 4 weeks: 90 - 120 mL (3 - 4 oz) per feed

1 month and older: 90 - 150 mL (3 - 5 oz) per feed

Sources:

ABM Clinical Protocol #8: Human Milk Storage Information for Home Use for Full-Term Infants, Revised 2017

Human Milk Banking Association of North America, Best Practice for Expressing, Storing and Handling Human Milk in Hospitals, Homes, and Child Care Settings. Frances Jones, 3rd Ed., 2011