

# BREAST MILK HANDLING AND STORAGE

***Improperly collected or stored breast milk can become contaminated and cause sepsis  
All staff must adhere to local policies on collection of human milk and hand washing***

## ADMINISTRATION

- Ensure [there is](#) a dedicated fridge and freezer for storage of milk on ward

## ADVICE TO MOTHERS

- Advise mothers to bath or shower daily
- it is not advisable to wash breasts with bactericidal detergent or soap
- Before expressing milk, it is essential to wash hands thoroughly with soap and water and dry with a disposable towel
- Give all breastfeeding mothers the BLISS 'Preterm Breastfeeding' leaflet
- [Emphasise to mothers the importance of washing all breast milk collecting equipment properly before disinfection](#)
- [wash equipment with detergent and hot water using bottle brush \(not shared\) and rinse well before disinfection](#)
- [discard bottle brushes on discharge](#)

## COLLECTION OF BREAST MILK

- Give mother sterile collection kit
- Clearly label milk from individual mothers and store separately in fridge
- Blood and other pigments can discolour milk causing appearance to vary considerably
- unless it appears rancid and smells offensive, the appearance of milk is of no clinical concern and it can be safely fed to baby

## STORAGE

### Where

- Store in refrigerator at 4° C. Freshly expressed breast milk can be stored for 48 hr before freezing
- [Breast milk can be stored for 3 months in freezer without a defrost cycle](#)
- Monitor fridge and freezer temperature using maximum/minimum thermometer that has been calibrated every 6 months

### How

- Place milk in sterile container with airtight lid
- Ensure bottles labelled appropriately
- Store labelled bottles in separate containers in fridge/freezer (individual containers must not hold bottles from more than one mother)
- Wash containers in fridge daily in warm soapy water, rinse well and dry thoroughly
- Clean container between each use
- Shake milk containers vigorously before use
- refrigerated milk separates with hind milk forming top layer

## DEFROSTING

- Use frozen milk in sequence of storage
- Defrost frozen milk in fridge
- If frozen milk needs to be thawed quickly, hold bottle under cold or tepid water
- shake frequently and do not allow water to enter bottle via cap
- Discard thawed milk (stored in a refrigerator) after 12 hr

## USE

- Once removed from fridge, fresh or defrosted milk must be used within 4 hr
- Fresh milk is preferable to thawed milk

- Change continuous tube feeding (tubing between nasogastric tube and pump) every 4 hr
- to minimise fat loss, [position](#) syringe delivering feed in semi-upright position

## TRANSPORTATION OF MILK

Milk is often transported from:

- Mother's home to hospital
- transport in an insulated container that can be easily cleaned
- encourage mothers to use coolant block to maintain stable temperature
- Hospital to hospital
- use rigid container for easy cleaning (e.g. cool box) and fill empty space with bubble wrap

## PRECAUTIONS

- Wash hands thoroughly
- Cover cuts and abrasions and wear gloves if necessary

## RECORD KEEPING

- Label all bottles with baby's printed hospital label containing:
  - name and hospital number
  - date and time of expression
- If mother expressing milk at home, provide supply of printed hospital labels
- Before giving breast milk, two members of staff must check label and cross-reference with baby's identity bracelet to ensure milk is not given to wrong child
- See **Breastfeeding preterm infants (advocacy and contraindications)** guideline

## STORAGE FOLLOWING DISCHARGE

- If in date, immediately transfer any milk left in unit refrigerator to freezer
- Discard milk stored in neonatal unit freezer one month after discharge