

Recipient Guidelines for Milk Handling

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 finger nails. 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. Antibacterial soap is not necessary or recommended. Avoid fragranced and colored soaps and lotions.

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 72 hours or freeze it.

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 refrigerator the night before you' plan to use it. Refrigerator defrosting takes about 12 hours.
- Place the frozen milk in a warm water bath. Do not thaw the milk in hot water or heat the milk, as this can destroy valuable immunologic components.

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

Never microwave breastmilk. Microwaving breastmilk 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. Gently swirl the container to mix the milk. You may also notice that color, consistency and odor of breastmilk vary. Variations occur due to diet, donor individuality, and time of day of pumping.

When infants receive all or most of their nutrition from expressed milk, care must be taken to maximize its nutritional and immunologic properties. Recent research has shown significant loss of vitamin C during storage, and bottle systems can affect ascorbic acid levels. For babies fed primarily expressed milk, we recommend vitamin C supplementation for your infant.

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:

0-2 months - 2 to 5 oz. per feeding

2-4 months - 4 to 6 oz. per feeding

4-6 months - 5 to 7 oz. per feeding

Average intake by weight:

8 lbs. - about 21 oz. in 24 hours

9 lbs. - about 24 oz. in 24 hours

10 lbs. - about 27 oz. in 24 hours

11 lbs. - about 29 oz. in 24 hours

12 lbs. - about 32 oz. in 24 hours

Source: 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