



GUIDANCE FOR CHILD CARE CENTERS ON SAFE STORAGE AND HANDLING OF BREAST MILK during the COVID-19 Pandemic

1) Can my Child Care provide human milk during the COVID-19 Pandemic?

YES! Breastfeeding saves lives, *especially* during emergencies. All international world health guidelines agree: breastfeeding should continue and be supported during the COVID-19 pandemic.

With appropriate precautions, human milk is the best source of food for infants and young children, providing nutrition and antibodies that protect them from viral infections and other diseases. Child care providers should promote breastfeeding and provide a place for parents to breastfeed and/or express milk on site.

2) What are the Guidelines for Safe Storage and Handling of Expressed Human Milk for Child Care Settings?

Even during a pandemic, the guidelines for human milk storage and handling are the same. So, please take all necessary action to keep your families and employees safe, including continuing to provide expressed human milk to children in your care.

Remember: Human milk is not a biohazard.

Human milk is food and does not require special precautions or a separate space. It is easy to store and handle human milk in your child care setting.

Before handling human milk: Wash your hands well with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

Safe storage of human milk:

- Milk storage bags or clean food-grade containers with tight fitting lids made of glass or plastic to store expressed milk.
- Never store human milk in disposable bottle liners or plastic bags that are not intended for storing breast milk.
- Freshly expressed or pumped milk can be stored:

- At room temperature (between 60-85°F) for up to 4 hours is optimal or for 6-8 hours under very clean conditions.
- In the refrigerator for up to 4 days is optimal or 5-8 days under very clean conditions
- In the freezer for about 6 months is optimal and up to 12 months is acceptable.

Storage tips:

- Have families clearly label the container with the date and time milk was expressed and the child's name.
- Do not store human milk in the door of the refrigerator or freezer. This will help protect against temperature changes from the door opening and closing.
- If possible, milk should be stored in coldest area of the refrigerator or freezer to avoid temperature changes.

Safe Thawing of Human Milk

- There are several ways to thaw human milk:
- In the refrigerator.
- In a container of warm or lukewarm water.
- Under lukewarm running water.
- Never thaw or heat human milk in a microwave or in boiling water on the stove. Doing so can destroy nutrients and create hot spots, which can burn a baby's mouth.
- Once human milk is brought to room temperature or warmed after storing in the refrigerator or freezer, it should be used within 2 hours, and works well as a snack shortly after feeding within the 2-hour timeframe.
- Never refreeze milk once it has been thawed.

Feeding Expressed Milk

- Human milk does not need to be warmed. It can be served at room temperature or cold, based upon the child's preference.
- If you decide to warm the milk:
- Keep the container sealed while warming.
- Place the container of milk into a separate container or pot of warm water for a few minutes or by running warm (not hot) tap water over the container for a few minutes.
- Do not heat human milk directly on the stove or in the microwave.
- Test the temperature of the milk on the inner wrist before feeding.
- Swirl the milk to mix the fat, which may have separated.
- Any leftover milk can still be used within 2 hours after the baby is finished feeding. After 2 hours, milk should be discarded.

3) Where can I learn more?

For additional resources, tool, and support, please visit:

- www.mibreastfeeding/child-care
- www.mibreastfeeding/disaster-ready
- www.mibreastfeeding/COVID-19, or
- Email info@mibreastfeeding.org

3 TIPS

FOR THE CAREGIVER OF THE BREASTFED CHILD

1



BREAST MILK IS NOT A BIOHAZARD

Human milk is food.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) do not classify human milk as a biohazard.

In places of work or child care settings, breast milk can be stored in a shared company refrigerator.

Source: womenshealth.gov

[LEARN MORE](#)

www.mibreastfeeding.org



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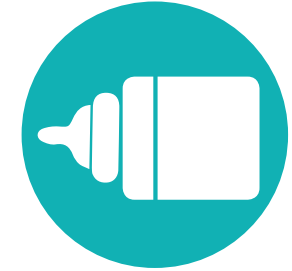
BREAST MILK IS STABLE AND EASILY STORED

BREAST MILK STORAGE GUIDELINES

Location of storage	Temperature	Max. recommended storage duration
Room Temp.	16–29°C (60–85°F)	4 hours optimal
		6–8 hours acceptable under very clean conditions
Refrigerator	4°C (39.2°F)	4 days optimal
		5–8 days under very clean conditions
Freezer	0°F (–18°C)	6 months optimal
		12 months acceptable

Source: ABM Protocol

3



PACED BOTTLE FEEDING MIMICS BREASTFEEDING AND SUPPORTS HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT

Babies should be bottle-fed:

- When they're hungry, not on a schedule
- Held and sitting up
- Gently, allowing the infant to draw nipple into mouth
- With bottle held horizontally
- Consistent with a breastfed rhythm with frequent pauses
- Switching from one side to the other side midway through a feed
- Letting baby control the flow, usually taking around 10-20 minutes

Source: Kellymom.com