



Handling Milk in the NICU

1. Keep milk frozen in a monitored freezer.
2. Milk that is cold thawed (thawed in refrigerator) may be used for 48 hours from completed thawing.
3. It may take 12-18 hours for milk to thaw in the refrigerator.
4. It is most efficient to place the amount of milk to be used the next day into the refrigerator for thawing. Be sure to mark the time the milk was placed in the refrigerator.
5. If it is necessary to quick thaw milk, place sealed bottle in a clean container of shallow, warm milk making sure the water is not too deep. Change the water as it cools. Water should not be higher than the shoulder of the bottle and bottles should not float.
6. Never heat or thaw milk in a microwave.
7. Gently swirl thawed milk before removing a feeding.
8. Feedings should be removed with a sterile syringe being careful to not touch anything with the tip of the syringe.
9. Milk may also be carefully poured out of the bottle into another container for feeding and the remainder re-capped and refrigerated for later use.
10. Once milk is warmed over refrigerator temperature, discard the leftover milk.
11. One bottle of milk can be divided and used for multiple recipients.
12. Previously frozen, cold thawed milk (not warmed) milk may be at room temperature for 4 hours (continuous feedings).
13. Thawed, warmed milk should be discarded if it has been out of the refrigerator for more than one hour.
14. Donor human milk may be used for up to 48 hours after defrosting as long as it has been kept in the refrigerator.
15. Fortified donor milk must be used within 24 hours.
16. Hospitals must record in the medical record the dispensing milk bank and batch number and of each feeding.

For complete information regarding expressing, storing and handling human milk, MMBNT recommends *2019 Best Practice for Expressing, Storing and Handling Human Milk in Hospitals, Homes and Child Care Settings* (Fourth Edition). This book may be purchased at the Human Milk Banking Association of North America website www.hmbana.org.