

Breast Milk Safe Handling Practices

For Early Childhood Education and Care services

This fact sheet summarises the information from the most up to date national guidelines:

www.eatforhealth.gov.au/sites/default/files/files/the_guidelines/170131_n56_infant_feeding_guidelines.pdf

www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/phd-gug-directorscoord

www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0013/134032/Food_Safety_Manual_for_Tasmanian_Education_and_Care_Services_Combined.pdf

Transport, labelling and immediate storage

Breast milk should be brought to the early childhood setting:

- In sterilised bottles, and transported in an insulated bag (or container) with an ice brick.
- Labelled with the name of the child, and the date the milk is to be used.

Breast milk should be put into the refrigerator (or freezer) as soon as it arrives at the centre.

Previously frozen breast milk that has thawed should only be refrigerated and not be refrozen. This should be prioritised to be used within four hours.

Bottles should be placed in a non-spill tray on the lowest shelf of the refrigerator. This is to make sure that if knocked or spilled, breast milk does not drip onto other food.

Storage beyond 24 hours

Breast milk should be stored in a sterilised container or bottle and can be stored:

- In the refrigerator (5°C or lower) for no more than 72 hours (three days). Always store breast milk at the back of the fridge where it is coldest and on the lowest shelf
- Frozen breast milk, which has been thawed in the fridge, can be kept refrigerated (below 5°C) for up to 24 hours but cannot be re-frozen.
- Frozen breast milk, which has been thawed in warm water, can be kept in the refrigerator (below 5°C) for four hours but cannot be re-frozen.
- Frozen breast milk that has begun to thaw during transport is considered to have thawed above 5°C and, therefore, fits within this category, and must be used within four hours. It should not be re-frozen.

Heating breast milk

Infants can drink breast milk straight from the refrigerator; however, if an infant prefers warm milk:

- Heat refrigerated milk by standing the bottle in warm water until the milk is a comfortable body temperature. This should

take around 10 minutes (no more than 15 minutes).

- After heating, gently roll the bottle to evenly distribute the heat.

Frozen breast milk can be thawed in the fridge, or by standing the bottle in a container of warm (not boiling) water. Alternatively, the bottle can be placed under cool running water, gradually allowing the water to get warmer until the milk becomes liquid. Gently roll the bottle to make sure the heat is evenly distributed.

Always check the temperature of the milk before giving it to an infant.

This can be done by dropping a little milk on the inside of your wrist. The milk should feel the same temperature as your skin or a bit cooler.

Do not use a microwave to warm or defrost breast milk, as this destroys essential nutrients in the milk and can also create 'hot spots' and risk burning the infant.

Throw away any leftover breast milk that has been heated or any milk that is left in a bottle after a feed. This cannot be saved for later or rewarmed.

Protocols for breast milk provision

When it is time to give an infant breast milk from the fridge:

- Make sure two staff members check the name on the bottle is correct for the infant who is to be fed.
- Sign the infant's feeding record.
- Offer the breast milk in the sterilised bottle or cup provided by the parent/care-giver.

Some families will choose to feed their infants with bottles, while others may choose to have the expressed breast milk offered in a cup from 6 months of age.

If an infant is given the milk of another mother, or if you think this might have happened, notify your director immediately.

Cleaning bottles for infants

After use, all bottles and teats should be rinsed in cold water and sent home to be washed and sterilised.

Ideally bottles will be brought to the service cleaned and sterilised, however when the need arises to clean bottles within the workplace the following procedures can be a guide.

Bottles need to be sterilised, sanitised and disinfected to ensure that they do not carry any harmful bacteria. This can be done with several different methods:

- boiling with an electric sterilising unit,
- chemical sterilisation or
- using a microwave steriliser.

Whichever method is chosen, be sure to always follow the instructions carefully.

Boiling is the preferred method for sterilising bottles as it provides consistent and reliable results when the steps outlined below are taken:

- Wash bottles, teats, and caps in hot soapy water with a bottle/teat brush before sterilisation.
- Place all utensils, including bottles, teats and caps in a large saucepan on the back burner of the stove.
- Cover all utensils with water, making sure to eliminate all air bubbles from the bottles.
- Bring the water to the boil and boil for five minutes. Turn off – do not allow it to boil dry.
- Allow the equipment to cool in the saucepan until it is hand hot and then remove it – be very careful if children are present.
- Store all equipment that is not being used straight away in a clean container in the fridge.
- All equipment must be re-sterilised if it isn't used within 24 hours.

Each centre may have varying policies and practices for sterilisation and cleaning of bottles. More detailed guidelines can be found in the Infant feeding Guidelines 2012, pages 77-78; www.eatforhealth.gov.au/sites/default/files/files/the_guidelines/170131_n56_infant_feeding_guidelines.pdf.

Good bottle feeding practices

Infants should be allowed to decide the amount of milk they wish to drink, and should never be made to finish a bottle.

Always check the temperature of the milk before feeding to an infant by dropping a little milk onto the inside of your wrist – it should feel warm but not hot.

Hold, cuddle and talk to an infant while feeding (if it isn't too distracting).

Never leave an infant to feed on their own (with a bottle propped) – the milk may flow too quickly and this can cause the infant to splutter and choke.

Never put an infant to sleep with a bottle. This increases the risk of ear infections and tooth decay as well as the risk of choking.

National Quality Framework

- Standard: 2.2.1
- Regulations: 77, 78, 79

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