**Proper Handling and Storage of Breast Milk**

* Be sure to wash your hands before expressing or handling breast milk.
* When collecting milk, be sure to store it in clean containers, such as screw cap bottles, hard plastic cups, with tight caps, or heavy-duty bags.
* Clearly label the milk with the date it was expressed to facilitate using the oldest milk first.
* Do not add fresh milk to already frozen milk within a storage container. It is best not to mix the two.
* Do not save milk from a used bottle for the use at another feeding time.

**Safely Thawing Breast Milk**

* As time permits, thaw frozen breast milk by transferring it to the refrigerator for thawing or by swirling it in a bowl of warm water.
* Avoid using a microwave oven to thaw or heat bottles of breast milk.
* Excess heat can destroy the nutrient quality of the expressed milk.
* Do not re-freeze breast milk once it has been thawed.

**Human Milk Storage Guidelines**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Location** | **Temperature** | **Duration** | **Comments** |
| Freshly expressed breast milk | Countertop25°C (77°F) or colder (room temperature) | Up to 4 hours | Containers should be covered and kept as cool as possible |
| Refrigerator | Refrigerator 4**°**C (39.2**°**F) | Up to 4 days | Store milk in the back of the main body of the refrigerator |
| Freezer  Deep Freezer | 18**°**C (0°F) or colder  -20**°**C (-4°F) | 3-6 months  6-12 months | Store milk toward the back of the freezer where the temperature is most constant |
| Insulated cooler bag | 15**°**C (59°F) | 24 hours | Always keep icepacks in contact with the milk containers, limit opening cooler bag |

Reference: Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine. (2017). Clinical Protocol # 8: Human Milk Storage Information for Home Use

for Healthy Full-Term Infants.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2017). Proper Handling and Storage of Human Milk.