

## SAFE HANDLING OF BREAST MILK

These guidelines are provided for safe handling and storage techniques to maintain the high quality of expressed breast milk for the health of the infant.

### Preparing and Storing Breast Milk

- Parents should be encouraged to transport breast milk to the childcare in a cooler bag with ice or ice packs.
- Non-frozen breast milk should be transported in containers used to feed the infant.
- Frozen breast milk can be stored in single-use plastic bags and placed in freezer.
- Store each child's bottled expressed breast milk in a container designated only for that child.
- Each bottle should be clearly labeled with the child's first and last name and the date and time the milk was expressed.
- The bottle should be stored in the refrigerator upon arrival to the facility.
- Only clean and sanitized bottles and nipples should be used in feeding.
- Do not mix fresh and frozen breast milk.

### Thawing Breast Milk

- Use oldest milk first.
- Breast milk may be fed at room temperature, cool, or warmed.
- Thaw frozen breast milk in the refrigerator or under cool running water.
- Do not use a microwave to heat or thaw bottles of breast milk.
  - They do not heat evenly, risking chance of scalding baby.
  - Excess heat can destroy nutrient quality of breast milk.
  - Bottle may explode due to excess heat.
- Do not re-freeze thawed breast milk.
- Confirm each child's identity before feeding to prevent potential exposure to another mother's breast milk.

### Staff Exposure to Breast Milk

Guidelines published in the *National Health and Safety Performance Standards; Guidelines for Early Care and Education Programs*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, state that "Although human milk is a body fluid, it is not necessary to wear gloves when feeding or handling human milk. Unless there is visible blood in the milk, the risk of exposure to infectious organisms either during feeding or from milk that the infant regurgitates is not significant." Also breast milk is not included in OSHA standards as being "other potentially infectious materials", therefore contact with breast milk does not constitute an "occupational exposure".

### Feeding Breast Milk to Another Mother's Child

If a child has been given another child's bottle of expressed breast milk by mistake, the potential exposure to hepatitis B, hepatitis C, HIV, or other infectious diseases should be treated the same way as an exposure to any other body fluid.

- Inform the parents/guardians of the child who was given the wrong bottle that:
  - Their child was given another child's bottle of expressed breast milk.
  - The risk of hepatitis B, hepatitis C, and HIV transmission is believed to be low.
  - They should contact their health care provider to discuss the exposure and any tests that may need to be done (e.g., hepatitis B, hepatitis C, HIV).

## BREAST MILK EXPOSURE

- Inform the mother who expressed the breast milk that the bottles were switched and ask:
  - Will she give the other parents information on when the breast milk was expressed and how it was handled prior to being brought to the childcare center?
  - If she has been tested previously for hepatitis B, hepatitis C, or HIV, would she be willing to share the results with parents of the child given the incorrect milk?
  - If not tested previously for hepatitis B, hepatitis C, or HIV, would she be willing to be tested and share the results with the other parents?
- The risk of an infant becoming infected with HIV after one feeding of breast milk from an infected mother is thought to be extremely low since
  - chemical properties in breast milk act together with time and cold temperatures to destroy HIV that may be present in expressed breast milk.
  - transmission of HIV from single breast milk exposure has never been documented.
  - it is not recommended that women who are HIV-infected breastfeed their infants in the United States.

For further information about breast milk storage or safe handling practices, please call your childcare health consultant. For questions about breast milk exposures call Hennepin County HSPHD-Epidemiology at (612) 543-5230 or call your local health department.

### References:

Center for Disease Control and Prevention. 2009. What to do if an infant or child is mistakenly fed another woman's expressed breast milk.

[www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/recommendations/other\\_mothers\\_milk.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/recommendations/other_mothers_milk.htm)

National Health and Safety Performance Standards; Guidelines for Early Care and Education Programs, *Caring for our Children*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition.

