



Mecklenburg County Health Department

Bottle Storage

The following applies to bottles of formula and breast milk in child care centers:

- 1) The “one hour rule” no longer applies to used bottles. Note: The “one hour rule” was guidance provided to child care centers in the past and was not an official regulation.
- 2) Once the meal is complete, a used bottle cannot be re-served to the child at the child care center
- 3) Examples of when the meal is considered to be complete:
 - i. A child has consumed all or a portion of a bottle and the child is sleeping in his/her crib.
 - ii. A child has used all or a portion of a bottle, the child is playing and caregivers are working on another task

Note: Contact the Health Department if you have any other meal completion examples.

- 4) In order to meet each child’s needs, it is up to the center to determine each child’s feeding schedule. For example, if a child is not completing their bottle, the center and the child’s parent(s) typically will discuss the situation and determine if feeding times need to be adjusted or if additional bottles are needed throughout the day.
- 5) Once a bottle has been removed from temperature control (refrigerator), the bottle must be served within **one hour**. Example: An unused bottle is removed from the refrigerator and placed in the bottle warmer, once the bottle has been removed from the refrigerator, the caregiver has **one hour** to serve the bottle
- 6) Used formula and breast milk should not be placed back into any facility refrigerator. If used bottles of breast milk and formula are placed back into a refrigerator the center takes on the risk and potential violations associated with the practice.
- 7) Once the bottle has been used it should be placed in the child’s cubbie. Any leftover formula/breast milk can either be discarded at the center or left in the bottle for parents. Due to the growth of bacteria in used bottles, the Health Department does not recommend that parents use any leftover formula/breast milk. If a parent wishes to re-use any leftover formula/breast milk later on in the day after the child leaves the center, it is a best practice to have the parent provide a cooler of ice to store the used formula/breast milk.
- 8) The attached Carolina Global Breastfeeding Institute document has been approved for use in child care centers by the Children’s Environmental Health Branch

Questions? Please call 704-336-5101.



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Human Milk Storage: Guidelines for Child Care Facilities

Note: These guidelines are for childcare facilities only, and are stricter than home milk storage guidelines.

North Carolina Guidelines:		
	Refrigerator	Freezer
Freshly expressed milk	Up to 24 hours	Do not freeze
Frozen milk from home	Up to 24 hours	Up to 7 days
Previously frozen, thawed in refrigerator, but not warmed	Up to 24 hours	Do not refreeze
Previously frozen, brought to room temperature	Send home or discard, per feeding plan	Do not refreeze

National Guidelines* (to be used where supported by state guidelines):		
	Refrigerator	Freezer
Freshly expressed milk	5 days	3-6 months

*These guidelines are in keeping with best practices described in *Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards, Guidelines for Early Care and Education Programs, 3rd Ed. (2011)*. Individual states may have regulations that differ, so be sure you know what rules apply to your center.

References: Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine Protocol Committee. 2010. Breastfeeding Med 5:127-30. and "Proper handling and storage of human milk – Storage duration of fresh human milk for use with healthy full term infants."

Important Reminders

- o The CDC classifies human milk as a FOOD, not a bodily fluid. It is not considered a biohazardous substance.
- o To prevent the spread of germs, wash your hands before preparing any bottle.
- o All human milk containers should have the child's name, the date received, and the date thawed.
- o An unfed bottle of human milk can be left at room temperature for up to 2 hours if brought from home, and up to 4 hours if freshly expressed at the child care center.
- o Thaw and feed the oldest milk first.
- o Do not refreeze previously-frozen human milk.
- o **NEVER** use a microwave to thaw or warm human milk.
- o Return all thawed and frozen milk to the child's parent/guardian, or discard, as indicated in the family's feeding plan.



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In Collaboration With:
NC Child Care Health and Safety Resource Center
NC Infant Toddler Enhancement Project
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