BREAST MILK STORAGE FOR THE HOSPITALIZED INFANT

**Purpose:**
To ensure the proper storage, labeling, and thawing of breast milk.

**Policy Statement:**
- All breast milk should be collected in a manner that prevents contamination.
- Breast milk should be stored in sterile glass or hard plastic containers. Use of polyethylene bags for storage should be discouraged since there is considerably higher fat loss when milk is stored in these bags.
- All breast milk must be labeled with the infant’s full name, infant’s date of birth, mother’s full name, and the date and time the milk was expressed. In addition a label with an imprint of the INFANT’S addressograph plate will be place on the storage container.
- Dedicated refrigerators/freezers are provided for breast milk storage in the NICU, newborn nursery and on the pediatric unit. They will be kept in secure areas and accessed by staff only.
- Fresh expressed breast milk should be refrigerated (≤4°C) within two hours of expressing.
- Refrigerated expressed breast milk must be used within 48 hours or should be frozen or discarded.
- Breast milk stored in a freezer with a temperature (≤-20°C) may be stored up to 6 months. Thawed frozen breast milk must be used within 24 hours or discarded.
- Use fresh milk first if available. Frozen milk (≤-20°C) should be used by the oldest date first. Milk should be used within 3 months of expression for the hospitalized premature infant. However, use of older milk is preferable to no human milk, and older milk should not be discarded.
- When defrosting breast milk, the container will be brought to the infant’s bedside. The nurse will compare the infant’s identification band and the label on the expressed breast milk and will verify that the infant’s full name and medical record number match. The nurse will then initial, date and time the label. Frozen breast milk should be thawed quickly in lukewarm water, with precautions taken to avoid contamination from the water. It should not be left at room temperature for long periods of time, nor should it be subjected to extremely hot water or to microwave ovens. Each infant
should have his/her own basin marked with infant’s name for purposes of thawing frozen milk.

- Any time breast milk is transferred to a secondary container (e.g. volufeed, syringe, etc.) each container will be labeled with the patient’s full name and medical record number.
- Prior to feeding/administering expressed breast milk by any caregiver, the nurse will compare the infant’s identification band and the label on the expressed breast milk and will verify that the infant’s full name and medical record number match.
- Whenever there is a question about the integrity of the breast milk or the label is not clearly visible with the date of the collection, the breast milk should be discarded.
- Breast milk will be transferred with the infant and should be sent home with the baby at discharge. All attempts will be made to contact the family regarding picking up of milk that was left behind. If no contact is made with the mother, breast milk that is left behind will be discarded after 7 days.

**Application:**
All breast milk that is stored in the hospital for infants who are in-patients

**Exceptions:**
None

**Responsibility:**
RN

**Other Related Policies:**
**Birth Place Policy and Procedures**

**Policy No.: # 2.06**
**Title: Breastfeeding**

**Initiated by:** Birth Place Policy & Procedure Committee

**Contributing Departments:**
1. Nursing
2. Infectious Disease
3. Pediatrics
4. Lactation

**References:**
