

# HANDLING OF EXPRESSED BREASTMILK

## Guidance for ECE kaimahi



The following storage and handling guidelines for Expressed Breastmilk (EBM) should be followed by whānau and Early Childhood Education (ECE) kaimahi.

EBM needs to be handled and stored carefully to minimise bacterial growth that could harm the infant. Take care to not overheat the milk so that the immunological qualities of the milk are not lost.

## STORAGE

1. Store EBM in an airtight container or sealed bag following the conditions in the table below.
2. All EBM should be labelled with the date collected. If there is more than one container of EBM, use the oldest one first.
3. Store EBM at the back of the fridge or freezer where it is colder.
  - It is recommended that extra EBM, especially for an exclusively breastfed pēpi, should always be available at the ECE service to avoid running out. Storing frozen EBM at the ECE service should be an option.

Storage conditions	Storage time	Additional information
Warm room (25-32°C)	3-4 hours	Store in a covered container
Room temperature (<24°C)	4-8 hours (Ideal: 3-4 hours)	Store in a covered container
Refrigerated (<4°C)	72 hours (three days)	Store at the back of the fridge. Do not store in the door of the fridge
Frozen		Store at the back of the freezer in the bottom half
• Freezer box in fridge	• 2 weeks	
• Separate door fridge/freezer	• 3-6 months	Store at the back of the freezer in the bottom half
• Separate chest freezer (deep freeze)	• 6-12 months	Store at the back of the freezer in the bottom half

**Note: Once warmed, discard any unused EBM after 2 hours.**

(Source: MOH Healthy Eating Guidelines for New Zealand Babies and Toddlers, 2021; CDC Breastfeeding Guidelines, 2022)

## PREPARATION

4. Kaimahi should wash their hands before and after preparing and/or feeding EBM.

5. Kaimahi should ensure all feeding equipment is clean and if necessary sterile:

- ECE kaimahi are responsible for storing, handling and giving the EBM to tamariki while they are in their care but are not usually responsible for equipment sterilisation.
- Whānau should provide clean, and if necessary sterile equipment for storage and feeding EBM. For pēpi under 6 months, all equipment and containers need to be washed and sterilised. For tamariki over 6 months, wash equipment in warm soapy water and rinse well.



### Te reo Māori

Kaimahi - worker, staff

Whānau - extended family  
or community

Pēpi - baby

Tamariki - children

## THAWING & WARMING

- Breastmilk can vary in colour and it may not look like cow's milk or other infant formulas. It may be yellowish, bluish or quite pale and watery looking - this is normal. Sometimes the fat separates during storage and goes to the top of the milk. Gently shake the bottle to mix the fat back in with the rest of the milk.



6. When preparing EBM, extra care needs to be taken to retain the nutritious properties of the milk. Do not thaw or heat EBM in the microwave. It can easily overheat or heat unevenly and burn tamariki.
7. Thaw or warm EBM by placing the cup or bottle containing the milk in hot water. Gently swirl the milk to distribute the heat evenly.
8. Check the temperature of the milk by placing a few drops on the inside of your wrist. The milk should feel warm but not hot. Hold pēpi in a semi-upright position when feeding.