



INFORMATION SHEET: BREAST MILK – SAFE MANAGEMENT (V1 - December 2011)



1. SAFE MANAGEMENT OF BREAST MILK

- All healthcare facilities have a duty of care to ensure breast milk, including expressed breast milk (EBM), is administered and stored safely.
- Facilities should also implement current Policies to ensure:
 - The correct breast milk from the biological mother is given to the correct baby.
 - Documentation and checking procedures prior to giving EBM to a baby are complete and accurate.

2. BACKGROUND

- EBM is a body fluid that has the potential for the possible transmission of infectious pathogens, if contaminated due to inappropriate storage and handling. Therefore methods for the storage of EBM in healthcare facilities must ensure that contamination does not occur. As recommended by the NHMRC, 2011: Infant Feeding Guidelines: *"The requirements for storing breast milk are more stringent for sick or premature babies, than for healthy babies at home"*.
- There is also risk of infection transmission if the EBM is administered to the wrong baby, which could potentially occur in any clinical area where mothers and babies are separated and/or EBM is dispensed. Stringent checking to ensure that a mother's milk is given to her baby, and her baby only is critical.
- EBM can be expressed from the mother's breast either manually or with the aid of a breast pump and fed to a baby via a sterile container when required. This could occur when the mother and baby are temporarily separated; the milk supply needs to be increased; there are damaged nipples; there is an uncoordinated suck; difficulty attaching; or the baby is premature or unwell and is unable to breastfeed.

3. STORAGE OF EBM

- Appropriate sized refrigerators/freezers should be available for the storage of EBM to avoid crowding.
- EBM should be stored in the refrigerator at 4°C as soon as possible after collection.
- Refrigerated EBM ideally should be used within 48hrs. Thawed milk should be used within 24 hours.
- If EBM is to be stored frozen, it should be placed in the freezer as soon as possible following collection.
- Shelf life of frozen EBM is as follows:
 - Two weeks if stored in freezer compartment of a refrigerator.
 - 3 months if in freezer compartment which has a separate door to that of the refrigerator unit.
 - 6 months if stored in a deep freezer unit.

4. TRANSPORT AND THAWING

- If EBM is to be transported, (eg. from mothers home):
 - Frozen EBM should be maintained in a completely frozen state.
 - Refrigerated EBM should be maintained at 4°C by using appropriate equipment, eg. esky and freezer bricks.
- EBM should be placed in the refrigerator/freezer immediately on arrival.
- To thaw EBM - place in refrigerator over a 24 hour period, or thaw under cool to warm running water.
- **Do not** refreeze.
- **Never** microwave.
- Discard if not used within 24 hours.

5. RISK MANAGEMENT

- Each baby should have an allocated area and a labeled storage basket/container for EBM stored in the refrigerator/freezer.
- All EBM containers should be clearly labeled using moisture resistant ink, including the following details:
 - The baby's and mother's name (computer generated ID).
 - Baby's/mother's medical record number.
 - Milk type and additives if any.
 - Date and time of collection.
 - Date and time of freezing.
 - Date and time thawed.
- EBM that is dispensed into a second or third container/syringe should be correctly labeled (as above), and signed following checking with original EBM container at time of dispensing.
- All relevant HCWs handling EBM should receive regular education on safe management.
- All parents should be provided with appropriate information regarding the collection, labeling, storage and checking processes for the management and storage of EBM. Refer HICMR Info Sheet: *Checking of Expressed Breast Milk*.
- The refrigerator temperature should be monitored and recorded daily as per HICMR Policy: *Food Protection Practices During Food Handling*.

6. CHECKING OF EBM

- For all breastfed babies correct checking procedures should be followed using an appropriate EBM checklist, eg. HICMR Policy: *Breast Milk - Safe Management*.
- Two members of staff, or one member of staff and the mother if appropriate, should always undertake identification of the EBM and checking the baby's identification bands, including:
 - **Prior** to giving babies to their mothers for breastfeeding.
 - **Prior** to storing EBM, or removing EBM from storage.
 - **Prior** to giving EBM to babies.

References

1. NHMRC, Draft, October 2011. Infant Feeding Guidelines For Health Workers. http://consultations.nhmrc.gov.au/open_public_consultations/infant-feeding
2. NSW Health, 2010. PD2010_019: Maternity - Breast Milk: Safe Management. www.health.nsw.gov.au/policies/pd/2010/pdf/PD2010_019.pdf