

QA18 – Storage and Handling of Frozen Breast Milk

QUESTION:

When using frozen breastmilk in an enteral pump bag, how many hours worth should we recommend at one time? Are there handling procedures to keep frozen breastmilk lasting longer for enteral pump use?

ANSWER:

Breast milk contains a number of immunological factors that are advantageous to the infant. Expression, collection, and storage of human milk may alter these and other components. Lemons et al ¹ found increased colony counts in fresh milk after 6 hours at room temperature during continuous drip feedings. In addition, there were increasing fat losses after 4 hours. The authors of this study suggest changing the syringe and tubing at 4 hours.

Guidelines for storage and handling of human milk may also be found in “Breastfeeding and Human Lactation” ² pages 790-794. In addition to handling guidelines, these authors also suggest changing the syringe and tubing every 4 hours.

References:

- 1) Lemons PM et al Am J Perinatology 1983 Oct 1:(1) 76-80 Bacterial Growth in Human milk during continuous feeding.
- 2) Jan Riordan and Kathleen Averbach: Breastfeeding and Human Lactation, 2nd ed, Jones and Bartlett Publishers, Boston 1999.