

Technical Brief

Expiration and Thaw Times for Human Milk

The safety of human milk, whether mother’s own milk (MOM) or donor milk (DM), is dependent on appropriate storage and handling. While not required, dedicated human milk refrigerators and freezers are preferred. Temperature guidelines for storing human milk is 2°C to 8°C (≤4°C recommended) in a refrigerator, –20°C or colder in a freezer.¹ Inappropriate storage temperatures may compromise the integrity and safety of the milk.

Human milk may be thawed in a refrigerator or milk warmer, and should never be thawed using a microwave. Additionally, thawed or partially thawed human milk should never be refrozen.¹

Recommended storage time	Condition	Recommended temperature	Milk type
<4 hours	Room Temperature	25°C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fresh pumped milk ▪ MOM once removed from the refrigerator¹ ▪ Maximum 4-hour hang times for Prolacta's human milk–based products¹
24 hours	Refrigerated	≤4°C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Previously frozen, unpasteurized MOM, once fully thawed¹ ▪ Human milk fortified with cow's milk–based fortifiers
48 hours	Refrigerated	≤4°C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fresh MOM refrigerated without a centralized milk lab¹ ▪ Human milk fortified with Prolacta human milk–based products (or according to hospital policy regarding human milk) ▪ Prolact+ H²MF[®], Prolact CR[®], Prolact RTF, Prolact HM[®], and PremieLact[®] from the time thawing begins
72–96 hours	Refrigerated	≤4°C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fresh milk refrigerated with a centralized milk lab under optimal conditions*¹
Check the use-by date on the product label (up to 2 years from manufactured date)	Frozen	< –20°C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Unopened Prolacta human milk–based products² (Prolact+ H²MF, Prolact CR, Prolact RTF, Prolact HM, and PremieLact)

*Optimal conditions include centralized human milk handling in a dedicated space; strict sanitation procedures for human milk handling; unit dosing of feedings; and ability to determine expression and transport conditions for individual mother.²

¹ Steele CL, Collins EA, eds. *Infant and Pediatric Feedings: Guidelines for Preparation of Human Milk and Formula in Health Care Facilities*. 3rd ed. Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics; 2019.

² Prolacta Bioscience. Technical bulletin: Freezer storage, MKT-0499.