

# Using donor breast milk for your baby

## **Donor breast milk**

Donor breast milk is breast milk that has been expressed by another mother and donated to a milk bank.

Once the donor milk has been collected, it is pasteurised (heat treated to make the milk safe), and tested for infection, before it is given to babies.

## **Why donor breast milk has been recommended for your baby**

Breast milk provides nutrition and protection. It contains elements that are only found in breast milk. This is important for babies who are born early (premature) or who are unwell. These babies have weaker digestive systems and breast milk is easier to digest than formula.

For all babies, their mother's breast milk is the best source of nutrition at the start of their life. When the mother's own breast milk is not available, donor breast milk can be provided as an alternative.

You will be provided with information and support to help establish your own supply, through frequent, effective expressing. Donor breast milk can be used as a bridge as you establish your supply.

If using breast milk was not your intention, it is the most appropriate alternative to formula while your baby is in a vulnerable period.

The decision to use donor breast milk can bring up many emotions and questions.

The nurses and doctors caring for your baby are there to discuss these with you, to make sure that you are making the right decision for you and your baby.

If you were planning to use formula milk to feed your baby, this can be introduced gradually in a few weeks as your baby grows.

## **Benefits of donor breast milk**

Donor breast milk can help protect babies from infection, by boosting their immune system. Research suggests donor breast milk may protect against necrotising enterocolitis (NEC) which is a serious gut condition.

## **Is donor breast milk safe?**

All donor breast milk processed in our Milk Bank follows National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) Guidelines. Breast milk donors have strict health and lifestyle screening (tests) to become a donor. All donors have a blood test to check for:

- HIV
- hepatitis B and C

- HTLV (human T-cell leukaemia viruses) Type 1 and 2
- syphilis

Mothers who are approved to be breast milk donors will be non-smokers and have good general health. They will not have had a recent medical procedure, any recent tattoos or body piercings. We also make sure that mothers who are donating their breast milk have no family exposure to tuberculosis (TB).

If you have any questions, or would like more information, please contact the Milk Bank.

## Useful information

### UK Association of Milk Banks

**web** [www.UKAMB.org](http://www.UKAMB.org)

### Unicef – Baby Friendly

**web** [www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly](http://www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly)

Information about necrotising enterocolitis (NEC) **web**

[www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/resources/patient-information/necrotising-enterocolitis.pdf](http://www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/resources/patient-information/necrotising-enterocolitis.pdf)

## Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about milk donation, please contact the Milk Bank **phone** 020 7188 8846, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm, or **email** [milkbank@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:milkbank@gstt.nhs.uk)

Out of hours, please contact the special care baby unit, **phone** 020 7188 8846

## **Your comments and concerns**

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS), **phone** 020 7188 8801 **email** [pals@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@gstt.nhs.uk). To make a complaint contact the resolution department **phone** 020 7188 3514 **email** [complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk)

## **Language and accessible support services**

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please contact the department your appointment is with.

## **NHS 111**

This service offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day, **phone** 111 **web** [www.111.nhs.uk](http://www.111.nhs.uk)

## **NHS website**

This website gives information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you take control of your health and wellbeing, **web** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)



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