



Oxford University Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Could you Become a Breastmilk Donor?

Information leaflet



What is the best milk for my baby?

A birth mother's own milk is the best possible food for their baby.

What is donor breastmilk?

Donor milk is another person's breastmilk, donated free by people who already have plenty of breast milk for their own baby.

Why do some babies require donor breastmilk?

Sometimes people are unable to feed their new baby. This may be due to illness, or because their milk production may not have started. Some people with premature or very sick babies may feel under too much pressure or may not be able to produce enough milk.

Why should I use donated breastmilk?

Research has shown that human breastmilk is more easily digested than formula milk; it also helps protect babies from infections.

Is donated breastmilk safe?

All our registered donors have undergone lifestyle checks and screening tests at recruitment. Our milk is tested for bacteria and pasteurised at 62.5°C for added protection; United Kingdom

Association for Milk Banking (UKAMB) guidelines recommend that all donor milk is heat treated. We have strict criteria, therefore only milk that falls into this category may be given to babies.

What screening takes place?

Potential breast milk donors have to be screened for the following.

Screening for infections

Although people are screened during pregnancy for HIV, Hepatitis B and Syphilis, to become compliant with the other milk banks around the UK we now require, with consent, a postnatal blood test showing a negative result before we can accept anyone as a donor.

Please contact your GP to request blood tests for the following:

- Human Immunodeficiency Virus (**HIV**).
- **Hepatitis B & C**.
- Human T Cell Lymphotropic Virus (**HTLV**).
- **Syphilis**.
- **HIV** is a virus which causes Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS), the name given to a collection of diseases which develop because the immune system breaks down. It is possible to carry the virus for many years without becoming ill.
- **Hepatitis B** is a virus that infects the liver cells and can cause inflammation of the liver. Hepatitis C is also a virus that infects the liver only shows no symptoms until significant damage is done.
- **HTLV** is from a family of retroviruses that are known to cause cancer in the white blood cells called T-cell leukaemia/ lymphoma.
- **Syphilis** is a sexually transmitted bacterial infection.

Negative results conclude that you are free from these viruses and infections at the time of registration.

Could you be a breastmilk donor?

The Oxford Milk Bank welcomes enquiries from anyone who is currently breastfeeding a baby under six months old, or who have milk stored. If you feel you meet the criteria for our screening process, we would love to hear from you.

Human milk banks must take precautions to ensure all milk is safe, so we follow the same strict rules as if you were a blood donor; all potential donors have to be tested for infections that may be passed on through milk. We are unable to use your milk until we have received your blood results. If you are currently taking any medication, please contact us. What may be safe for a person's own baby may not be for premature/sick babies.

When should I start expressing for the Milk Bank?

We recommend that you establish your own baby's feeding before donating your milk. Most of our donors decide within the first few months that they would like to express for us. For most people, the law of supply and demand ensures they still produce plenty of milk for their own baby.

How is milk collected?

All our donors need to have access to their own breast pump. The Milk Bank Manager is able to supply sterile bottles, labels, luggage tags and instructions. Each bottle needs to be clearly labelled with the donor's name and the date the milk was expressed, and put into a freezer.

When a 'batch' of milk is ready to be collected, the donor should put it into a clean plastic bag. This should be tied and a luggage label attached with a sticker identifying the donor. Any medication taken should also be added to the label. If you need your milk collected, please contact the Milk Bank Manager, or SERV direct who will organise this for you.

SERV: [**donormilk.obn@serv.org.uk**](mailto:donormilk.obn@serv.org.uk)

The amount of milk collected from each donor varies from person to person.

We are also able to accept 'one off' donations as 'every drop really does count'. Premature babies on the unit will often start with less than 20mls of milk per day.

When should I be expressing?

We encourage our donors to get into a routine and express around the same time each day. Milk is made on demand, so if you are not routinely expressing this may affect the amount you are able to produce. Some donors prefer to express from one breast while their baby is feeding from the other. Most importantly, to help you maintain a good milk supply, you must ensure you eat healthily and get lots of rest.

What should I do before I express?

All milk sent to the Milk Bank must be tested for acceptable limits of bacteria; we are unable to use any milk which has been contaminated. To minimise the chance of having to discard any of your precious milk, we ask you to take a few precautions before expressing.

- Please wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water and dry with a paper towel before touching your clean expressing kit.
- If you have a daily bath or shower you do not need to wash your breasts before expressing.

Cleaning your expressing equipment

We ask for equipment to be sterilised before expressing for us. There are several ways you can sterilise your expressing equipment. These include using a cold water sterilising solution or by steam sterilising.

Before each use:

- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water before handling / assembling the pump kit.

After each use:

- Remove the tubing (and cap) from the kit; these do not need to be washed.
- Dismantle the pump kit completely.
- Carefully and thoroughly wash all parts of the kit in hot soapy water (or in a dishwasher).
- Rinse thoroughly with running water.

Cold water sterilising solution:

- Follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- Change the sterilising solution every 24 hours.
- Leave expressing equipment in the sterilising solution for at least 30 minutes before use.
- Make sure there is no air trapped in your equipment when putting it in the sterilising solution.
- Keep all the equipment under the solution with a floating cover until next needed.

Steam sterilising (electric steriliser or microwave):

- It's important to follow the manufacturer's instructions, as there are several different types of sterilisers.
- Manufacturers will give guidelines on how long you can leave equipment that you are not using immediately (straight after sterilising) before it needs to be re-sterilised.

How do I store the milk?

Pour your collected milk into a sterilised bottle and put it into the fridge straight away. You may add to this bottle throughout the day, but please do not fill it more than 100mls full as the milk will expand in the bottle once frozen. Start new bottles when necessary. At the end of a 24 hour period please put your bottle(s) into your freezer, even if you have only expressed a small amount.

If you need to take any prescribed medicine, such as antibiotics, or any herbal remedies, please stop collecting for the Milk Bank until 48 hours after you have taken the last dose.

What if I am unwell?

Most minor illnesses will not affect your milk, however we do ask you to let the Milk Bank know or stop collecting until you are well again.

Can I drink alcohol?

Yes, but in moderation. Please avoid drinking more than 1 to 2 units of alcohol once or twice a week. Please also leave as much time as possible between alcohol consumption and expressing.

We hope this leaflet will help you make the valuable decision to become one of our donors.

All information the Milk Bank receives is treated in strictest confidence and we are happy to answer any questions you may have.

**Please contact Amanda Wood, Milk Bank Manager, on:
amanda.wood@ouh.nhs.uk**

Information contained in this leaflet is obtained from current Oxford University Hospitals Guidelines.

Further information

If you would like an interpreter, please speak to the department where you are being seen.

Please also tell them if you would like this information in another format, such as:

- Easy Read
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronic
- another language.

We have tried to make the information in this leaflet meet your needs. If it does not meet your individual needs or situation, please speak to your healthcare team. They are happy to help.

Author: Human Milk Bank Manager
March 2024
Review: March 2027
Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
www.ouh.nhs.uk/information



We would like to thank the Oxfordshire Maternity and Neonatal Voices Partnership for their contribution in the development of this leaflet.

Making a difference across our hospitals

charity@ouh.nhs.uk | 01865 743 444 | hospitalcharity.co.uk

OXFORD HOSPITALS CHARITY (REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER 1175809)

