



Human Milk

for

Our Babies

Instructions and frequently asked
questions for human milk donors

Canterbury

District Health Board

Te Poari Hauora o Waitaha



Introduction

Breastmilk is the optimal food for babies and is particularly important for premature and critically ill babies. These babies have higher very specific nutritional and immunity needs. Mothers may be unable to provide milk for their baby due to maternal illness, medication or low milk supply. We now have a facility for accepting donor human milk to help in these situations.

Mothers who volunteer to donate to the human bank are usually producing more milk than their baby needs.

If you are interested in becoming a human milk donor we require you to complete a life-style questionnaire and to undertake blood tests. Factors that may exclude you from becoming a donor include smoking, drinking alcohol regularly, taking certain medications or misusing drugs.



What is a donor breastmilk bank?

This is a facility that accepts donated human milk which is then screened, pasteurised and frozen until required.



How can I become a donor?

If you are still interested in becoming a human milk donor after reading this pamphlet you will be guided through the process by NICU staff.

The human milk bank appreciates both the support from the donor mothers, volunteers and those who contribute financially to maintain this facility.



Information for Mothers who are Expressing and Donating Milk

Thank you for the gift of your breastmilk to the Human Milk Bank.

If your baby is in the Neonatal Unit, you may be using one of our hospital grade electric breast pumps. If you are at home and using your own breast pump, the milk bank staff will assess the suitability of the pump for expressing.

As a donor you will receive the following:

- Lifestyle questionnaire
- Consent to donate form
- Expressing equipment – if required
- Sterile collection bottles
- Expressing labels for the collection bottles
- Human Milk Bank donor card
- Plastic bags and ties
- Amounts tag

It is important to keep everything as clean as possible to avoid contaminating the milk for donation. Before you start expressing, please ensure you read the general hygiene guidelines.

Milk production depends on milk removal or 'supply and demand'. There is no absolute right time to express – express when it is convenient for you and ensure that you express often enough to encourage production. One option for expressing is when your baby only feeds on one side- just express the other side after the feed. You will find what works for you.



Contacting the Human Milk Bank

If you have any questions or concerns contact the Human Milk Bank on (03) 364 4699 or milkbanknicu@cdhb.health.nz. Please note the Milk Bank is staffed on a Tuesday and either Thursdays or Fridays. If urgent, ask to speak to the Neonatal Unit ACNM who will contact the Milk Bank Manager.



Frequently Asked Questions for Human Milk Donors

Who can donate human milk?

Any mother who wishes to provide the gift of human milk for the Human Milk Bank is invited to complete the lifestyle questionnaire and screening blood tests. Any milk provided is in excess of her own baby's needs, growth and development.

Why donate?

A key concern for premature babies is a severe gut disorder called NEC (Necrotising Enterocolitis). Human milk is associated with lowering the risk of NEC. Donating to a milk bank ensures screened and pasteurised donor milk is available for these premature and other vulnerable babies.

What steps are required to be a donor?

You will be requested to complete a lifestyle questionnaire. Following this, you will be asked to have a blood test to screen for infections that can be transmitted through breast-milk.

What are the blood tests I will consent to?

The screening blood tests will include HIV 1 & 2, Hepatitis B and C, HTLV 1 & 2. HTLV 1 & 2 are risk factors for the onset of adult leukaemia and lymphoma

The blood tests are done at no cost to you.

How much do I need to donate?

Keep freezing your breastmilk until you have approximately 1 litre of milk to donate. Single donations will be considered for mothers who have a moderate to large supply of excess milk that has been stored frozen for up to 3 months.

What happens to my milk if it is not used?

There are a variety of reasons why your milk may not be suitable for use by the donor milk bank. We will contact you to discuss this if it is the case.

What happens if I take medications, drink alcohol and/or smoke?

Most prescribed medications are compatible with breastfeeding your own baby but need to be discussed when donating milk for the milk bank (for instance, blood pressure medications, antibiotics, or even herbal medicines need to be discussed). We would also like to discuss if you have had recent vaccinations. We discourage drinking alcohol while you are expressing for the milk bank. We also support a smoke free policy. It is important that you provide accurate details regarding your prescribed and social drug use, alcohol intake and smoking habits.

What happens if I am unwell?

You should continue to breastfeed your baby as usual and express milk for comfort as necessary. You may use this expressed milk for your own baby. If you have a fever or are unwell we advise you to contact the Human Milk Bank.

Will you accept frozen milk?

We accept milk that has been frozen up to 3 months but this is subject to you meeting the criteria as a donor and that the milk passes the quality checks.

What happens to the milk before it is given to the babies?

Initially you freeze your milk at home and it will remain there until you have at least 1 litre to donate. On arrival at the bank your milk is given a unique number and remains frozen until required for pasteurisation. A sample is checked for a bacterial count and then is heat treated (pasteurised). A further check of the bacterial count may occur on random samples for quality control purposes.

Will I be paid?

No. All our donors are volunteers.

What equipment will I need?

The milk bank will supply you with a donor pack that will include bottles, labels, bags and tags and a donor card. It is assumed that you will already be using a breast pump but if you are not then please talk to the Milk Bank staff.

Will I be able to meet the babies who are receiving my milk?

No. Your contact will be with the Milk Bank staff. We hope to organise yearly meetings where donors get to meet other donors and Milk Bank staff as a way of thanking you for your contribution.

Are my details confidential?

All information collected in relation to your donation will be shared with CDHB staff as appropriate. This information, except personal information about the recipients of your milk, will be placed on your general medical record and shared with your GP as appropriate. Your milk will be given a unique identifier so your milk can be traced if required. Your details will not appear on the pasteurised milk.

I am unable to supply milk but wish to support the milk bank

Donations to the Canterbury Neonatal Unit Trust Fund (Westpac Papanui Branch, 030854 0584185 00) who funded the establishment of the Milk Bank are appreciated from those who wish to contribute financially to maintain this facility. This may be one off or in the form of on going fundraising.



Human Milk Storage Information

This applies to mothers who are storing their expressed milk at home. Hand hygiene and cleaning of the electric pump parts are very important.

Storage guidelines

- Collect milk in the sterile bottles supplied by the Human Milk Bank.
- Store milk from each expression in separate bottles.
- Leave a gap of 2 cm at the top of each bottle to allow for expansion when the milk freezes.
- Use the labels provided to label each bottle with the date and time of milk expression.
- Place the labelled bottles of milk in a clean container or plastic bag.
- Freeze expressed milk for the Human Milk Bank as soon as possible after each expression - immediately is best.

If you do not have a freezer please ask for advice from the Human Milk Bank staff.

How long can I store frozen expressed breastmilk?

- 2 weeks in the freezer section located inside a refrigerator.
- 3 months in a separate door refrigerator / freezer
- 6 months in a deep freeze or chest freezer, **however the human milk bank can only accept frozen milk that has been stored for less than 3 months.**

How to transport expressed milk to the hospital

So your donated milk remains frozen we recommend you bring your donated milk

- in a cooler container
- to hospital as soon as possible

The Human Milk Bank staff are available to discuss any concerns regarding storage of milk. Please remember to bring your donor card.

What to do on arrival at Christchurch Women's Hospital

Take your donated milk to the Neonatal Unit reception area on the 4th floor of Christchurch Women's Hospital. A Staff member will receive the milk from you.



General hygiene when expressing at home

Routine hand washing decreases the risk of contamination of pumps, pump parts, storage containers and expressed milk.

Hand hygiene

Before expressing milk or handling equipment:

1. Lather hands actively with soap and water for 30 seconds, paying particular attention to the area between fingers and under the finger nails.
 - We encourage you to keep your finger nails short.
 - We recommend using liquid soap from a pump.
 - We encourage using alcohol gel (can be purchased from your supermarket) as an excellent option to improve hand hygiene.
2. Dry hands with a clean towel or disposable paper towel. Use the towel to turn off tap.

Pump hygiene

Keep the outside of the breast pump and tubing clean and wipe away any milk spots:

1. Ensure your hands are clean and dry.
2. Dismantle and wash the milk collection kit after each episode of expression (take care with small parts as they are easily lost).
3. Dismantle the pump set excluding the tubing attaching the pump to the personal kit.
4. A separate bowl or container should be used to wash the milk collection kit to avoid contamination from the sink.
5. Rinse equipment in cool water to remove residue, then wash all milk collection kit parts in hot water (from hot tap is enough) and washing up detergent to clean and disinfect. Use a bottle brush or a newly designated toothbrush to remove any solidified milk.
6. Rinse in hot water to wash off detergent residues.
7. Shake off excess water.
8. For mothers staying in the neonatal unit who already use tablet disinfectant please continue to use that method.
9. For mothers at home place the milk collection kit between dry paper towels to air dry until the next use.

The Neonatal Unit will provide additional labels for you on request.



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