



York and Scarborough  
Teaching Hospitals  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Donor Breastmilk

## Your questions answered

Information for parents

### **Special Care Baby Unit**

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## **What is the best milk for my baby?**

Your own breastmilk is the best milk for your baby and you should always be supported to express and give this or breastfeed as the best option. Breast milk goes beyond providing your baby with nutrition and calories, it provides protection from infections and inflammation whilst supporting the development of your baby's organs, systems and brain.

Donor expressed breastmilk is your next option as it has many health benefits for your baby as well as giving good easily digestible nutritional content.

Formula milk is nutritionally adequate but does not provide any of the protective factors your own or donor breastmilk does.

## **What is donor breastmilk?**

Donor milk is human milk that has been collected from donor mums, screened, processed and pasteurised. Donors are breastfeeding mums with babies under 9 months old who give their excess milk freely to the milk bank.

## Why donor milk?

- Donor milk can be used before your supply is established.
- There may be reasons why you can't breastfeed so it can be used then (within the agreed criteria's set for use of donor milk).

## Is it safe?

Donor mothers will have been screened to be donors at breastmilk banks. The screening includes lifestyle habits and risk of exposure to certain diseases (see below). Donated milk is tested for bacteria and heat treated (a form of pasteurization) for added protection.

## What screening takes place?

It is recommended in guidelines produced by NICE and endorsed by the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health that donor mothers are tested for:

- HIV 1 and 2 (viruses causing AIDS)
- Hepatitis B and C
- HTLV I and II (Human T-cell Leukaemia Viruses)
- Syphilis

## What is important in the donor's previous medical history?

Donors provide a complete medical history and have blood tests to make sure that they are not carrying any diseases that can be transferred to a baby.

## What is lifestyle screening?

A donor mother

- Does NOT smoke any type of cigarettes/use nicotine patches
- Does NOT take certain medication (acceptable replacement drugs include thyroxine, insulin and Ventolin)
- Has NOT had any recent tattoos, body piercings or acupuncture (other than a registered NHS acupuncturist)
- Has NOT had a recent yellow fever vaccine
- Has NOT recently returned from an area of the world where certain infectious diseases are present (based on current guidance)
- Does NOT have a history of TB
- Has NOT been advised that she is of increased risks of CJD

## How a UK milk bank is run

UK milk banks follow strict guidelines recommended by NICE in 2010 and we obtain the donor milk from Hull Royal Infirmary who are a satellite unit for the North West Human Milk Bank based at Chester University ([www.chestermilkbank.org.uk](http://www.chestermilkbank.org.uk)).

## How is milk collected?

All mothers will have been shown how to express and label their milk cleanly.

NICE Guidance explains this processes in detail so that each donation is clearly labelled and traceable, stored in an appropriate and safe manner before they reach the milk bank for further testing and treatment.

The information in this leaflet has been kindly provided by the North West Human Milk Bank. Used with permission.

## **Tell us what you think of this leaflet**

We hope that you found this leaflet helpful. If you would like to tell us what you think, please contact:  
SCBU Manager, York and Scarborough Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE, telephone 01904 726005 or email [victoria.smith2@york.nhs.uk](mailto:victoria.smith2@york.nhs.uk).

## **Teaching, training and research**

Our Trust is committed to teaching, training and research to support the development of health and healthcare in our community. Healthcare students may observe consultations for this purpose. You can opt out if you do not want students to observe. We may also ask you if you would like to be involved in our research.

## **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**

PALS offers impartial advice and assistance to patients, their relatives, friends and carers. We can listen to feedback (positive or negative), answer questions and help resolve any concerns about Trust services.

PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or email [pals@york.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@york.nhs.uk).

An answer phone is available out of hours.

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