

A Parents' Guide to Understanding:

Donor Breast Milk

What is the best milk for my baby?

Research has shown that your own breast milk is the best milk for your baby as it is highly beneficial to their health in the short and also long term. Breast milk protects your baby from infections and is easier to digest than formula milk. This is especially important if your baby is premature or unwell. Breast milk contains immunoglobulins and antibodies to boost your baby's immune system.

What is Donor Breast Milk?

Donor breast milk is expressed and donated by a mother that is then processed by a Donor Milk Bank to be given to your baby. It is the next best milk to your own.

Why Donor Milk?

Breast milk is more easily digested than formula milk and it helps protect your baby from infection. Breastmilk reduces the risk of Necrotising Enterocolitis (NEC), which is a condition that can affect the bowel of preterm babies and make them very unwell.

Is Donor Breast Milk safe?

Donor mothers must meet strict health and lifestyle standards, and must have blood screening tests before they can donate milk. Donor mothers have been shown how to express, collect and store their milk cleanly.

Donor mothers don't smoke, drink more than small amounts of alcohol, take certain medicines or take drugs. They must not have certain medical conditions requiring medicines.

Also, every bottle of milk donated is tested for bacteria, and heat treated for extra protection.

What infection screening is carried out on donor mothers?

- HIV 1 and 2 (viruses causing AIDS)
- Hepatitis B and C (viruses that can cause damage to the liver)
- HTLV I and II (Human Leukaemia viruses)
- Syphilis

Why is my baby being offered Donor Breast Milk?

If your milk is not available or you have been advised that your milk should not be given to your baby, you may be asked if you consent to donor breast milk be used.

Can all babies have donor breast milk?

Donor breast milk is mainly available for very premature or small babies and those are unwell with certain conditions.

How long will my baby stay on donor breast milk?

If your own milk supply is improving, we will always use your breast milk rather than donor milk.

Usually your baby will have donor breast milk for 1 to 3 weeks. Once your baby is managing full donor milk feeds well, formula may start to be slowly introduced, if your breast milk continues to be unavailable.

Where can I find out more information about donor breast milk?

You can ask the nurse or doctor looking after your baby, or use the link below which takes you to the UK Association for Milk Banking.

<http://www.ukamb.org>

