

## Donor Breast Milk Information leaflet for Parents

This information leaflet is based on 'Guidelines for the establishment and operation of human milk banks in the UK' UKAMB (United Kingdom Association for Milk Banking)

### What is Donor Breast Milk?

Donor breast milk is breast milk 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.

### Which is the best milk for my baby?

Your own breast milk is the best milk for your baby. Preferred second choice is donor breast milk, although we understand that producing a lot of milk in the first few days may be difficult in some mothers.

### Why and when to use Donor Breast Milk

For babies who can receive donor milk it is a precious resource so its use is concentrated on babies who will benefit most. These include:

- 1) Premature babies born before 30 weeks or weighing less than 1500grams
- 2) Those who have had surgery on their intestines (their guts)

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

Whilst waiting for a mother's milk supply to come in, donor milk is often the preferred alternative. It is sometimes normal for milk production to be very slow and minimal in the first few days following preterm delivery. We will continue to provide you support to

express your own breast milk and use alongside donor milk for your baby. Expression of breastmilk should be started as soon as possible after birth, ideally within the first 2 hours.

We will ask for your consent before administering donor milk usually before 24hours of life as early feeding is important for baby to start feeding early. This is also because donor breast milk still contains many protective factors which help protect premature babies from infection. Protective factors are not present in formula milk which is prepared from cow's milk.

## **Is Donor Breast Milk safe?**

Donor mothers must meet strict health and lifestyle criteria and are required to have blood screening tests. Donor mothers have been shown how to express, collect and store their milk cleanly and safely. In addition, donated milk is tested for bacteria and pasteurised (heat treated) for added protection.

## **What Screening takes place?**

Donor mothers are screened for:

- Lifestyle
- Previous Medical History - previous blood transfusion, chronic or acute medical conditions requiring medication, family history of TB, family history of Creutzfeldt–Jakob disease [CJD] (however there is no evidence that CJD is transmitted through breast milk)
- Infections/ Blood born infections - HIV 1 and 2 (viruses causing AIDS), hepatitis B and C, HTLV I and II (Human T- lymphotropic virus), Syphilis.

## **What is Lifestyle Screening?**

A donor mother does not:

- Smoke
- Drink more than small amounts of alcohol
- Drink excessive number of drinks containing caffeine per day (coffee, tea or cola)
- Receive certain medications (traditional or herbal)
- Take Illegal/illicit drugs

## **What if I have more questions?**

Talk to a member of the medical team or nursing team if you have questions about the use of donor human milk for your baby. Advice and support can be obtained from both midwifery and neonatal staff.

## References

- 1) National Institute for Health and care Excellence (NICE) (2010) Donor Milk banks: The operation of donor milk bank services  
<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg93/resources/donor-milk-banks-service-operation-pdf-975747675589>
- 2) UKAMB (UK Association of Milk Banks) [www.ukamb.org](http://www.ukamb.org)

**This leaflet can be made available in different formats on request. If you would like to make any suggestions or comments about the content of this leaflet, then please contact the Patient Experience Team on 0151 702 4353 or by email at [pals@lwh.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@lwh.nhs.uk)**

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