



RBWH Milk Bank
 Women's and Newborn Services
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Becoming a Breast Milk Donor

Breast milk is the ideal nutrition for babies, including premature and sick newborns, with rare exceptions. The World Health Organisation (WHO) recommends exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life. Important short and long-term benefits for both the mother and baby are provided through breastfeeding. The natural food for a baby is a mother's own breast milk; however, some mothers have difficulty producing enough milk to feed their baby. In these cases a baby's doctor may recommend Pasteurised Donor Human Milk (PDHM) donated by other mothers who have qualified as suitable donors.

Who can become a breast milk donor?

Mothers who have a supply of breast milk may be able to donate, as long as their baby is thriving first. Particular care is taken because donor breast milk is to be given to premature or sick babies. For this reason, all prospective donors must meet strict guidelines. They must complete a detailed health and lifestyle questionnaire and have specific blood tests taken. Donors are also required to express, collect, store and transport breast milk in accordance with instructions provided by the RBWH Milk Bank.

Breast milk donors are not paid for their donations. The RBWH Milk Bank will support donors with appropriate advice, bottles, labels and expressing kits in return for this generous gift.

How do I become a breast milk donor?

If you are interested in becoming a breast milk donor, you can either call or email the RBWH Milk Bank Team (see below for details). You will be sent the screening and consent form to complete and return in a pre paid envelope. Someone from the Milk Bank will contact you to discuss the completed form, arrange a meeting with a member of the team and schedule you for some blood tests.

What is important in your medical history?

The staff of the RBWH Milk Bank need to be sure those potential donors are healthy before donating breast milk. It is also important that a breast milk donor:

- Does not have a chronic or acute medical condition requiring certain medications
- Does not have a family history of Tuberculosis (TB)
- Did not receive growth hormone prior to 1986
- Did not spend a total of 6 months or more in the United Kingdom between 1980 and 1996. This is a precautionary measure against variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (vCJD) – a human form of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) or “mad cow disease”
- Has not recently had certain (live) vaccinations

- Tests negative for HIV 1 and 2, Hepatitis B and C, HTLV I and II, and Syphilis
- Does not have a current history of some cancers

What is 'lifestyle' screening?

The RBWH Milk Bank will NOT accept donations from mothers who:

- Smoke
- Use illegal drugs or other prohibited substances
- Routinely consume more than two standard alcoholic drinks per day
- Routinely consume more than three cups of coffee, tea or other caffeinated stimulant drinks per day (including cola and stimulant soft drinks)

What infection screening is carried out?

There are two aspects of the infection screening process:

- Testing of the donor
- Testing of the donated breast milk

In order to be eligible to donate, all prospective donors are required to undertake blood tests to screen for viruses and infections that can be transmitted via breast milk such as:

- HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) 1 and 2 – the viruses that cause AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome)
- Hepatitis B and C
- HTLV (Human T-cell Lymphotropic Virus) I and II
- Syphilis, a sexually transmissible infection

As a prospective donor, you must be aware that any positive test results are notifiable to the Department of Health under law; therefore it is important that you consider the consequences of abnormal results. Depending on how long you choose to donate breast milk, you may need to repeat the blood tests after three months.

Once you have been accepted as a breast milk donor, your breast milk will also be tested for bacteria both before and after the breast milk is pasteurised.

How much breast milk will I be expected to collect?

We know that the amount of breast milk collected varies from mother to mother so there is no set amount of breast milk to express. Tiny premature babies might start with only 8mL of breast milk per day whereas a bigger baby might require 400mls/day. The screening process is extensive and we hope that you will donate what you can, as every little drop is valuable. We estimate that a regular breast milk donor would supply at least one to three litres of milk. This may be expressed regularly in small amounts. Once you have become an 'approved donor', the RBWH Milk Bank staff will provide specific details about expressing, storing and transporting your breast milk.

Will I meet the baby who receives my breast milk?

Individual donors do not meet the babies who may be receiving their donated breast milk, or their families. It is our policy to treat the privacy of both breast milk donors and recipients according to law. The RBWH Milk Bank is part of the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital and keeps all personal information strictly in accordance with law (Information Privacy Act 2009) (Hospital and Health Board Act 2011)

Use of donor breast milk for research

As the use of pasteurised donor milk is increasing in Australia, undertaking research will assist us to gain further knowledge of both the effects of pasteurisation on the components of donor breast milk and the outcomes for babies fed with pasteurised donor milk. You have the option of consenting to your donated breast milk being used for research purposes. All research will be subject to Human Research Ethics Committee approval.

When do I stop donating?

You can stop donating whenever you wish, no questions asked. We understand that things change and life is busy. We support your wish to cease donating breast milk, one thing we ask is you notify us via email or call directly.

There may also be times when we request that you stop donating:

- When it is your baby's first birthday the milk is considered to be 'too mature' for our premature babies
- If you start a medicine or treatment that is not compatible with donating
- If your blood tests are not up to date or any of the results are positive

I would like to become a donor or I have more questions

If you have any further questions they should be directed to the RBWH Milk Bank:

Phone:	Email:
(07) 3646 0542 (Mon-Fri 7-3pm)	Milk_Bank_RBWH@health.qld.gov.au



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