

Why use donor milk?

Feeding your baby your own milk is the first choice. When your own milk is not available, donor milk is the next best option. Just like your own milk, pasteurized donor human milk provides babies with protective proteins called antibodies which fight disease and infection and gives all babies the best chance for survival and growth. It is especially important for sick and small babies. Donor milk may be used to feed your baby until you are able to provide your own milk.



What is the Provincial Milk Bank?

The Provincial Milk Bank collects, stores, and distributes donated human milk to BC hospitals. Donors are screened and the milk is heat-treated (pasteurized). Most donated milk is used for sick or small babies who are in one of BC's neonatal intensive care units.

Is donor milk safe?

Screened donors must live in Canada and be in good health. The milk is also tested for bacteria. In BC, we follow the Human Milk Banking Association of North America (HMBANA) Standards to ensure the safety and quality of donor human milk.

How are milk donors screened?

A screening nurse asks each donor detailed questions about health and lifestyle. The donor's health care provider is sent a medical form and blood tests are completed (HIV, syphilis, hepatitis).

How much does donor milk cost?

Donor milk is provided to your baby at no cost while in hospital. After leaving the hospital, if donor milk is still needed, a fee is charged to help cover the cost of processing.

How do I get donor milk after I leave the hospital?

Before you are discharged from the hospital you will be given an order sheet to pick up donor milk. If you need more donor milk later, you need a prescription from your healthcare provider.

How do I store donor milk?

Store donor milk in the freezer until you are ready to use it. Milk can be stored in your home refrigerator freezer for 6 months or in a deep freeze for 12 months.

How do I prepare frozen donor milk for my baby?

- It is best to thaw frozen milk in the refrigerator. This takes about 12 hours. Milk that was previously frozen can be kept in the fridge for up to 48 hours. Once thawed, do not refreeze.
- Human milk that has been frozen and thawed may have white flecks and smell different than fresh milk. This is normal.
- Avoid wasting milk. Keep the main container of milk in the fridge and feed your baby an ounce or two at a time from a separate container such as a cup or bottle. You will learn how much your baby likes at each feeding.
- If you need to thaw milk quickly:
 - A bottle warmer can be used to defrost human milk quickly.
OR
 - Hold the bottle under lukewarm, running tap water. Make sure the lid is tightly sealed first.

OR
 - Stand the bottle of milk in a cup of warm water (use warm, not hot water). Water level should NOT touch the bottle lid.
 - Label the bottle of milk with the time and date it was defrosted
- After thawing:
 - Tighten the cap on the bottle.
 - Shake the bottle gently so that the fat mixes with the milk.
 - Pour what you need for one feeding into what you will use (such as cup or bottle) to give the donor milk to your baby unless you are going to use the entire bottle. Put any leftover milk in the refrigerator for the next feeding.
 - If you want to warm the milk, see above (under thawing).
 - Feed your baby using a spoon, cup or bottle as discussed with your healthcare provider.

TIPS

Do NOT microwave or heat milk directly on the stove.

All donor milk bottles come with an expiry date and batch number; always check the expiry date on the bottle before using.

If your baby does not finish the warmed milk at that feeding, throw it out.

Always call the Provincial Milk Bank BEFORE coming to the hospital to pick up milk to confirm there is milk available for your family.

**Provincial Milk Bank
604.875.3743**

What if I have questions?

Visit BC Women's Provincial Milk Bank (QR code below), call the Milk Bank at 604-875-3743 or speak with your healthcare provider.

