

Donor human milk

This leaflet explains more about donor human milk.

If you have any further questions, please speak to a doctor, midwife or neonatal nurse caring for you and your baby.

What is donor human milk?

Donor milk is breast milk expressed and donated by another mother that is then processed by a donor milk bank and given to your baby.

It is the next best thing to your own milk.

The milk bank at St George's is hosted by the neonatal unit and meets guidance from the UK Association of Milk Banks (UKAMB) and the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE).

Who can receive the service?

We have suggested donor human milk for your baby in the short term, probably for one of these reasons:

- formula milk could be harmful to your baby either because they were extremely preterm or for another reason
- you want to breastfeed, but can't feed or express straightaway for medical or other reasons.

Donor milk can also be used instead of formula milk for your baby if there is a slight delay in your milk 'coming in'.

What is the best milk for my baby?

Research has shown that your own breast milk is best for your baby as it helps keep them healthy both now and in the future.

Colostrum is the first milk you produce and kick starts your baby's immunity. This and the breast milk that come afterwards protect your baby from infections and are easier to digest than formula milk.

This is especially important if your baby is premature and/or sick. Formula milk doesn't protect your baby in the same way and may be unhelpful for starting breastfeeding later on or may cause an allergic reaction.

There is evidence that breast milk reduces the risk of Necrotizing Enterocolitis (NEC) which is a condition that can affect the bowel of preterm babies making them very unwell.

Is donor milk safe?

Mothers donating their breast milk must meet strict health and lifestyle criteria and have blood screening tests.

They are checked for:

- lifestyle – medications, smoking and alcohol
- medical history – previous blood transfusion, chronic or acute medical conditions needing medication, any family history of tuberculosis or Creutzfeldt–Jakob disease
- blood infections such as HIV, hepatitis B and C, Human T-lymphotropic virus and syphilis.

Mothers who don't meet the criteria in the [NICE guidelines](#) can't donate milk.

They are shown how to express, collect and store their milk to make sure it is clean and donated milk is also tested for bacteria and heat treated (pasteurised) before it is given to your baby.

Useful sources of information

Breastfeeding network 0300 100 0210 (9.30am to 9.30pm)

www.breastfeedingnetwork.org

Le Leche League 0845 120 2918

www.laleche.org.uk

www.bestbeginnings.org.uk

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about donor human milk, please contact the infant feeding team on 07766 800 365 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm). You can also contact your midwife or your baby's neonatal nurse on. Out of hours, please contact 020 8725 2012.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough Wing (near the lift foyer).

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

Web: www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

Tel: 111

