

Donor Human Milk

This leaflet explains 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. The milk has been screened and pasteurised and stored in a freezer. 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 whilst an inpatient for the following reasons:

- Your baby has low blood sugar.
- Your baby has jaundice.
- You want to breastfeed but can't feed or express straightaway for medical or other reasons.
- Your milk supply isn't quite enough currently and a supplement is needed alongside your milk while your supply is increasing.

Donor milk should be offered to complement and not replace your own feeding regime. It is important to continue to breastfeed and express milk for your baby at every feed.

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 comes afterwards protects 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 or may cause an allergic reaction.

There is evidence that breast milk reduces the risk of Necrotising 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](#) cannot donate milk.

Donating mothers 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 is heat treated (pasteurised) before it is given to your baby.

Useful sources of information

Breastfeeding Network (9:30am to 9:30pm) 0300 100 0210
www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk

La Leche League 0845 120 2918 www.laleche.org.uk

Best Beginnings www.bestbeginnings.org.uk

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Infant Feeding Team on 07766 800 365 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm). 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 advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or care. You can contact the PALS team on the advisory telephone line Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 2pm to 5pm.

A Walk-in service is available:

Monday, Tuesday and Thursday between 10am and 4pm

Friday between 10am and 2pm.

Please contact PALS in advance to check if there are any changes to opening times.

The Walk-in and Advisory telephone services are closed on Wednesdays.

PALS is based within the hospital in the ground floor main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough Wing.

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

AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website (www.accessable.co.uk). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.



Reference: MID_DHM_04 **Published:** April 2024 **Review date:** April 2026