



Human Milk Banking

What is a human milk bank?

A human milk bank is a service that screens, collects, processes and distributes human breast milk. The recipients of the breast milk are vulnerable pre-term and sick babies and special cases where mothers are unable to supply sufficient milk for their babies. This milk has been donated by volunteer breastfeeding mothers who are not related to the recipient babies.

Mothers interested in donating their excess breast milk undergo a screening procedure. This includes a questionnaire and health screening. All donated breast milk is tested, pasteurised, and frozen and ready to be supplied to vulnerable babies in need.



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Who can donate?

All healthy breastfeeding women can donate breast milk.

Other criteria include:

- Non smoker
- Non drug and alcohol user
- Lives a healthy lifestyle
- Willingness to undergo screening procedures that include HIV testing, Syphilis, TB and Hepatitis B.



Who will receive the donor breast milk?

Pasteurised human milk is given to vulnerable babies. These include premature babies, low birth-weight babies and abandoned/orphaned babies.



Why is human milk banking important?

Human milk is easily digested by a premature baby. It provides immune factors that protect the baby against infections, allergies & illnesses. Breast milk provides all the nutrients babies require to grow in the first 6 months of the life.

Human Milk Banks are a safe way of providing safe breast milk to babies who need it the most. The World Health Organization (WHO) has recently asked countries to promote the safe use of donor milk through human milk banks for vulnerable babies.



The Human Milk Bank Process

- The milk is heated to a specific temperature to destroy all potential germs (called pasteurisation), while keeping the milk's infection fighting and nutritional benefits.
- Following heating of the milk and rapid cooling, procedures are implemented to protect the milk before it is given to the baby.
- Sterile techniques are maintained throughout the pasteurisation process.
- Donor breast milk samples are labelled with the donor number, date of collection and pasteurisation batch number and date.

Pasteurised milk can be stored at -18°C for 6 months. For pre-term babies, milk should be stored for only 3 months; once the milk is thawed it can be stored for 24 hours in a refrigerator before use.

