

Frequently Asked Questions About Becoming A Donor

I have been taking domperidone to increase my milk supply and now I have more milk than my baby needs, can I donate the excess to the milk bank?

We are sorry but the Milk Bank is unable to accept milk from women taking domperidone. Although very little domperidone passes into breastmilk, it is a drug which cannot be given to babies who are at risk of heart problems or gut problems.

Similarly fenugreek, a herb used to increase breastmilk supply, has several interactions and cannot be given to premature or sick babies other than via their own mother's milk where we are aware of what she is taking.

(Taken from UKAMB website)

I was born in the UK and had a blood transfusion in 2004 after surgery. I have been fit and well since and would like to donate to the Milk Bank. Am I able to?

Currently we cannot accept donors who have lived in the United Kingdom, France or the Republic of Ireland between 1980 and 1996 for a cumulative 6 months for the same reasons blood donors are unable to donate.

I would really like to donate breastmilk, but at the moment I am taking an antidepressant. If I stop taking my drug how long must I wait before I can donate?

The time after giving birth is often stressful with reduced opportunity to sleep. If you stop your medication now, you may find your mood drops quickly. Our advice would be to consult your GP if you are considering this. There are other ways that you could support the Milk Bank if you wish to do so. Maybe you can fundraise for the special care baby unit or find a different way to support mothers and babies.

I would rather express by hand rather than use an electric pump as I can get more milk that way. Can I still donate?

Absolutely, as long as the hand hygiene guidelines are followed and the milk is collected into a Milk Bank container we are happy to accept it. We cannot accept drip milk (milk that leaks from a breast).

Am I allowed to drink alcohol while expressing milk for the Milk Bank?

Our current rules are that Milk donors can drink 1-2 standard units of alcohol once or twice a week. It is best to leave as much time as possible between taking the alcohol and expressing. If you like to have a wine in the evening then express milk for donation in the morning, about 12 hours later.

How do I store the milk?

When you have finished expressing, pour the milk carefully into the storage bottles. Do not touch the inside of the cap or the bottles. Always leave a 2cm gap at the top of each bottle as the milk will expand when frozen. Replace the

cap securely and label the bottle with your name and date expressed. Freeze the milk immediately after expressing if possible. If you wish to add to the bottle throughout the day, you can store it in the fridge for up to 24 hours before freezing it (at the back of the shelf, not in the fridge door) but ensure you refrigerate the new milk first to add cold milk to cold milk otherwise bacteria grow.

We can take milk up to 3 months from expression date, but that could be a lot of bottles and space if stored for that length of time. You might prefer to ring the Milk Bank and arrange a time to drop off a bag or two or milk collected over a month or whatever is convenient for you. We prefer to take at least a liter at each donation if possible as it's a convenient amount to pasteurise.

Can I continue to donate milk if I or my baby have thrush?

It is usually still possible to donate your milk if your **baby** has thrush, however, do please always mention this to the staff of the Milk Bank. However, when a baby has oral thrush, his or her breastfeeding mother may develop a thrush infection of the nipples. If you get sore nipples with pain after feeds, you should suspect the thrush has transferred to your nipples and you should seek treatment. If you have thrush on your breasts/nipples we would prefer you stand down until 48 hrs after you finish treatment or symptoms disappear. If **you** have vaginal thrush tell us but it doesn't stop you from donating. Hygiene is of great importance in this situation so we would like to discuss this with you.

Can I use the blood tests taken in pregnancy?

The NICE guideline for milk banks recommends that blood tests should be done on milk donors at the time they become a donor. This is to ensure that the most up to date screening is available to the Milk Bank. In addition pregnancy tests don't include Hepatitis C or HTLV 1&2 which are required for breastmilk donors. These are infections which mothers can have and may not be aware of as it can take a long time before symptoms appear.

I have a small separate fridge/freezer, is it OK to put the milk in with the frozen food?

Yes, the bottles from the milk bank can be placed into the plastic bag we have given you so that the food doesn't come into contact with the milk. Remember the Milk Bank can accept donations up to 3 months from the date it was expressed.

I have just started the depo injection. Is it OK to donate?

Yes, because the injection is a progesterone only medication and therefore acceptable. If however you feel unwell because of the injection at all do let the Milk Bank staff know.

I want to stop donating how do I do this?

Currently we recommend you stop donating to the Milk Bank at your baby's first birthday. We do thank you for your generous gift. As you stop expressing for the Human Milk Bank it could be a time that breast infections occur so take care to wean slowly.

If you feel that donating isn't for you, just tell us. We won't be offended as we understand it's not easy to juggle babies and expressing, it can be quite tiring. You know how the system works so spread the word to other mothers, that would be a great support.

My baby and I are being discharged from the unit in a couple of days and I realize I have lots of frozen milk in the NICU freezer, probably too much to store at home. Can I donate some of my frozen milk?

Your milk supply might change temporarily following discharge home. We recommend you take home at least some of your frozen expressed breast milk so that in any event you have a supply. However, it's not easy to know how much you want or need to take home, as everyone is different.

You have a couple of options;

1. Take all your milk home and if you find you aren't using it in 2-3 months from the expression dates you can donate some or all of it to the Milk Bank.
2. Take most of your milk home and donate a bag before you go home with the option of donating more later if you find you are not using it. If you want to do this option, take home your freshest milk so it has a longer shelf life. Donate your oldest milk to the Milk Bank. Make a note of the dates of your milk in your freezer so you know when to contact the Milk Bank to donate (up to 3 months from expression date).

In either case, having your screening (interview and bloods) done prior to going home would save you coming twice, once for screening and another time to donate. Bloods and interview can be done in the NICU in one session that takes about 20 minutes.

If you don't wish to donate your milk it can be stored for various amounts of time depending on your freezer type.

LINK: <https://www.health.govt.nz/your-health/healthy-living/babies-and-toddlers/breastfeeding/expressing-breast-milk-and-storing-expressed-milk>

I have been at home from the unit for 2 months and I have some expressed frozen breast milk in my freezer. I wasn't screened in the unit, can I donate my milk?

Yes, contact the Milk Bank by phone, email or CDHB website (Human Milk Bank) and one of the staff will get back to you to make arrangements to be screened as a donor. Please remember we are staffed on Tuesdays and either Thursdays or Fridays, so it may take a few days before you get a reply.