

Patient Information

Neonatal Unit

Donor Human Milk (DHM) use in the Neonatal Unit

Information for parents

What is Donor Human Milk (DHM)?

DHM is breast milk donated by other mothers. They are voluntary donors who are screened for any infections.

Is DHM safe?

Milk donors are screened via a health questionnaire and blood tests. They confirm (for each batch of milk donated) that they do not smoke, use any medication that could not be safe and do not take street drugs or abuse substances.

Donor milk has been heat-treated (pasteurised) at 62.5°C for 30 minutes followed by rapid cooling. This gets rid of unwanted bacteria but still gives the best available protection for the components of the donated milk that help to support your baby's immune system and development. It will convey many health benefits to your baby over formula milk.

DHM has been collected, stored and processed in accordance with National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidance. You can read more about this NICE guidance here:

www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg93

Why do we use Donor Milk?

Mother's own milk is the first choice for all babies on the Neonatal Unit.

We will support you to express your milk as soon as possible after delivery. However, in the early days, there may be insufficient mother's own milk for baby. For preterm and sick babies, DHM is the next best option where mother's milk is not enough or not available as advised by the World Health Organisation.



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DHM is easily digested. Babies given only human breast milk are protected from developing infections, including a serious gut condition called necrotising enterocolitis (NEC).

Research has shown that the use of DHM alongside good lactation support can increase breastfeeding rates upon discharge from the Neonatal Unit.

DHM will be used for a limited time only as it is not nutritionally complete for the preterm baby. It will be used until your baby establishes full feeds, which would normally be around 2 – 3 weeks.

Important information

- Each container of donor milk contains milk from a single donor.
- Milk donors are not paid for donating their milk.
- In common with blood and other tissue donations, records are kept to make sure that all donor milk is fully tracked between the donor and the recipient. Milk bank records are stored for 30 years.
- Donor milk will only be used when a mother's own milk is not available, and only after the mother has received information, support and practical help to provide her breast milk where possible.

Further information

If you have any further questions ask the neonatal staff who will be happy to help.

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please contact 024 7696 6671 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

The Trust operates a smoke free policy.

To give feedback on this leaflet please email feedback@uhcw.nhs.uk

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