

## Could you be a breast milk donor?

If you have decided to breastfeed your baby you will know that breast milk is the ideal food. It is especially important for babies who are sick or premature. Giving these babies breast milk increases their chances of survival and helps their long term development. Sometimes their mothers cannot feed them because they are also unwell or under too much stress to produce enough milk.

There are a number of milk banks across the UK which has been set up to help these babies by storing and distributing breast milk donated by breastfeeding mothers. The Rosie Hospital, Cambridge is one of the many milk banks across the UK.

Donors are asked to express their milk. The amount of milk collected from each donor varies from woman to woman and from week to week. One off donations will be considered. Every drop of milk is valuable and small or sick babies benefit from even the smallest quantities of breast milk. Premature babies will often start with less than 20mls per day.

**The law of supply and demand ensures that you still produce plenty of milk for your own baby.**

## Becoming a Breast Milk Donor

If you are interested in becoming a donor, please contact the Special Care Baby Unit at the Rosie Hospital and ask to speak to a Nursery Nurse, who will guide through the process of becoming a breast milk donor. If you are a mother, with a baby in the Special Care Baby Unit or the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, at the Rosie speak to one of the nursing staff who will be happy to answer any questions you may have and pass on your details to one of the Nursery Nurses.

The milk bank will need to know that you are in generally good health and the age of your baby. These are some of the questions you may be asked:

- Do you have any medical condition
- Do you routinely take any medicines including herbal remedies?

Answering yes to the above questions does not mean that you cannot be a donor but the milk bank staff may want to talk further to you.

The following questions will also be asked:

- Have you received a blood transfusion since 1980?
- Do you smoke or misuse substances?
- Do you routinely drink more than 2 units of alcohol per day or 3 cups of coffee or other caffeine containing drinks per day?
- Have you tested positive for HIV 1 or 2, Hepatitis B or C, HTLV I or II or Syphilis?

If you answer yes to any of these questions the milk bank will not be able to accept you milk.

## **Blood Tests for Breast Milk Donors**

Before we can accept you donated breast milk, as well as asking a number of general health and lifestyle questions you will also be asked to have blood tests to help ensure that no infections will be passed on through the milk.

A small amount of blood will be taken and tested for:

- HIV 1 and 2
- Hepatitis B and C
- HTLV I and II
- Syphilis

You may have been tested for some of these infections before your baby was born but the milk bank will want to repeat the tests before accepting your milk. Further tests may also be required if you donate for a long time and when you stop donating.

These infections can be passed on in a number of ways:

- By unprotected sexual intercourse
- By sharing needles
- Through blood transfusions (this is rare in the UK)
- Through breast milk
- Via tattoos and body piercing if non-sterile equipment is used.

If you have any positive test results you will be referred to a specialist for help and counseling.