

## Quotes from donors

"I love being able to help by donating my milk to those who are in need and the Hearts Milk Bank are so helpful with the process. They do a fantastic job!"

"Just sent off my first batch of milk! The team are super friendly and made the process simple and easy."

"An amazing milk bank who have helped me donate all my unused milk."



## Hearts Milk Bank

Providing screened donor milk to babies in hospital and at home.

01442 505020 / 021

info@heartsmilkbank.org

[www.humanmilkfoundation.org](http://www.humanmilkfoundation.org)

heartsmilkbank 

@heartsmilkbank 

Gossoms End Health Centre, Victory Road, Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire, HP4 1DL

Hearts Milk Bank is part of the Human Milk Foundation - Charities Commission number 1172522



## Donating your milk to the Hearts Milk Bank

The Hearts Milk Bank, based at Gossoms End Health Centre in Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire recruits mothers wishing to donate breastmilk which is surplus to their own baby's needs.

Taking the time to become a milk donor is a very special thing to do. You could be changing the lives of another baby and their family forever. Becoming a milk donor is similar to becoming a blood donor. Relatively few things would prevent you becoming a milk donor but we cannot accept donations if you are smoking, vaping or using nicotine replacement products, or if your child is over 2 years old.

Breastmilk donated to the Hearts Milk Bank is collected, stored and specially heat-treated in accordance with nationally agreed recommendations from NICE (the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence). We provide donor human milk to hospitals, where it is used to feed sick, premature babies in neonatal intensive care units, and to families at home through our community programme.

The Hearts Milk Bank also supports ethically funded research into the impact of breastfeeding on the health of babies and their families, and the complexity of human milk.

[www.humanmilkfoundation.org](http://www.humanmilkfoundation.org)

## How to become a milk donor

When you first contact the Hearts Milk Bank you will be asked a few simple questions:

- **Where do you live?**

If you live closer to an alternative milk bank we will provide their contact details and suggest you contact them first. If they are not able to recruit you we may still be able to continue the recruitment process, depending on whether we can collect milk from your area.

- **Do you smoke or use nicotine products?**

If you smoke, vape or use any nicotine replacement products you will not be able to donate your breastmilk. Very importantly you will be advised to continue to breastfeed your own infant but milk banks provide breastmilk to very tiny and very sick babies and therefore require donor milk that is completely free of nicotine and other compounds.

- **Do you take any routine medication?**

Most medications are safe to take whilst breastfeeding your own baby. Any very small risks are generally outweighed by the disadvantages to the baby of not being breastfed. However, some medications may exclude you from donating milk for preterm or sick infants, even though they are safe to take when breastfeeding your own baby. Please contact us to discuss, as some of these medications may be acceptable for donation for full term or older babies.

- **Have you had a recent blood transfusion?**

If you have had a blood transfusion in the last 4 months your blood tests may need to be delayed. However, you can still collect and store milk for donation in the meantime. Please contact the milk bank team for more advice.

If it seems that you'll be able to donate to the Hearts Milk Bank we'll email you a detailed health questionnaire and a consent form to complete and return. The next step will be to have screening blood tests for HIV, Hepatitis B and C, HTLV and Syphilis. For this we will send you a testing kit to take to your GP or local blood testing clinic. We'll also provide you with sterile containers to store your milk in, instructions to follow to help to ensure your milk is safe to use and a thermometer for the required daily freezer temperature checks.

If you aren't able to become a milk donor you may still be able to support research at the Hearts Milk Bank. Please email us to find out more.

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## Milk bank experiences

Charlotte found out about milk donation when her health visitor commented on how well her baby was growing on just her breastmilk and how mums like her can express once a day and freeze the milk for a milk bank.

Adeola's baby was 9 months old but still fully breastfeeding (plus complementary foods) when she found out about milk donation. Adeola's local milk bank only recruits mothers whose babies are less than 6 months old so they put her in touch with the Hearts Milk Bank. Because the HMB provides donor milk to hospitals caring for older babies as well as newborns, Adeola was able to go through the recruitment process. She started to express her milk once a day and after a few weeks she found she had plenty of milk to donate so she signed up to become a milk donor.

When Maya's premature baby went home from hospital after spending 3 months on the neonatal unit, she was very happy to be able to donate some of the milk she had stored for him but which he didn't need now he was completely breastfeeding. Maya was encouraged to wait for a couple of weeks whilst she fully established breastfeeding, before returning her completed questionnaire and consent form to agree that her donated milk could be tested and heat treated at the milk bank.

Jane's baby, Thomas, who was born with a heart problem, sadly died after a few days. She had been expressing her milk for Thomas and her milk supply had just come in. Hospital staff offered to show Jane how to stop her milk but she had donated milk with her first baby and decided to wait and see if she could donate again. She felt it would be a gift to other families from both herself and Thomas. The milk bank staff advised Jane that she didn't need to decide immediately and that she could see how she felt in a few days or weeks time but also explained that to be able to keep her milk supply flowing she would need to express frequently, at least to begin with. She followed this advice, and after 2 weeks arranged with the milk bank to get her blood tests done. She went on to donate for over 3 months and felt it was very helpful as part of her grieving for Thomas, to share her milk and to decide to stop lactating in her own time.