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Breast Milk Donation

The aim of this information material is to provide information on the need for donor breast milk, the requirements for breast milk donors, and the conditions and procedure for donating breast milk.

Breast milk is the best food for a newborn

In different countries, between 5% and 8% of newborns are ill and require hospitalisation and medical supervision. From a health and developmental perspective, breast milk and donor breast milk offer numerous advantages over infant formula. Breast milk is unique and meets the baby's needs. The primary food for all newborns is their mother's breast milk. If this is insufficient, the next best alternative is donor breast milk.

The feeding of premature and sick at term newborns should begin during their first hours of life. By this time, the mother will often have not yet produced a sufficient quantity of breast milk. In addition, sick newborns are unable themselves to actively suckle, which would stimulate the production of breast milk. Furthermore, there are other reasons why some mothers cannot breastfeed their baby.

Our goal in the Department of Neonatology is to provide for these children with the best possible alternative: breast milk donated by other mothers. We have a breast milk donor bank which distributes donor breast milk to newborns who need it.

However, the supply of donor breast milk is limited, so we have to make a choice. We prefer to give donated breast milk to the smallest premature babies.

Breast milk donation

Donation of breast milk is voluntary and is not remunerated. No financial benefit is sought from the preparation and use of donor breast milk.

Breast milk donors must be healthy adult mothers who have given birth within the last six months. Donating breast milk does not pose a risk to maternal health.

Before donating breast milk, you will be informed about the circumstances of the donation. to donate breast milk, you must sign a consent form and complete a health questionnaire. You have the right to withdraw your consent until you have donated your breast milk. You will be interviewed about your health and lifestyle, and blood tests will be taken to check for pathogens such as Human Immunodeficiency Virus or HIV, Human T-lymphocyte retrovirus or HTLV, Hepatitis B and C, syphilis, and cytomegalovirus or CMV. If necessary, other circumstances arising from the health questionnaire will also be specified.

The test results will be informed you on the basis of an agreement between the healthcare professional and you. You can also view your health data on the Health Portal at https://www.tervisportaal.ee/. If the results of the tests reveal risk factors or medical contraindications for donation, you will be informed about it and, if necessary, the breast milk donation will be stopped.

If the doctor at the breast milk donor bank has approved you as a suitable breast milk donor on the basis of the examination, health survey, and questionnaire, you will receive a donor code. You will be instructed on how to collect breast milk and which hygiene rules you must follow up. You can borrow an electric or manual breast pump from the breast milk donor bank.

If you continue donating breast milk to the breast milk donor bank for more than three (3) months after the initial tests have been carried out, the pathogen study will be repeated.

In which cases are you not suitable to be a breast milk donor?

- You smoke and/or use nicotine products such as nicotine gum, patches, or snus.
- You frequently consume alcohol.
- You are taking or have ever taken drugs.
- You have had blood or blood component transfusions in the last 12 months.
- You have had a tissue or organ transplant in the last 12 months.
- You have received a tattoo or body piercing in the last 12 months.
- You are a vegetarian (consultation with a breast milk donor bank doctor is required).
- You have had a sexual partner in the last 12 months who has or may have HIV, HTLV or hepatitis, or who has injected narcotics.
- You are a carrier of a chronic infection such as HIV, HTLV, hepatitis B and/or C, malaria, or tuberculosis.
- You have received treatment for cancer within the last five (5) years.

Temporary suspension of breast milk donation

The quality of breast milk can be affected by various medical conditions, as well as using some medications and preparations.

The breast milk donor bank must be informed, and collection of breast milk temporarily suspended, in the following cases:

- acute morbidity and all acute infections, including acute mastitis and fungal infections of the nipples;
- exacerbation of latent viral infections in the upper part of the body (e.g. HSV, VZV, or shingles);
- vaccination with a live vaccine (e.g. for measles, rubella, or mumps) or with a vaccine for chickenpox, influenza, rotavirus or polio;
- infection of family members with chickenpox.

The collection of breast milk can begin 12 hours after the consumption of alcohol.

You must inform the breast milk donor bank of all medications, natural preparations, vitamins, homeopathic preparations and herbs that you are using. In some cases, it may be necessary to temporarily suspend the donation of breast milk.

If the donation of breast milk is temporarily suspended, the doctor at the breast milk donor bank will decide when you can start collecting breast milk again.

Hygiene rules

To avoid contaminating the milk with bacteria, you must strictly follow the hygiene rules. Remember that when expressing breast milk with a breast pump, you must always wash your hands beforehand.

- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water, then dry them with a clean towel.
- Wash your nipples and the surrounding area with a soft sponge wetted in warm water. Do not use scented soap!

Pumping

Breast milk must be expressed using a breast pump. We do not accept milk that has dripped out of the breast on its own.

- Pump breast milk about six (6) times a day (ideally eight (8) times) for 20 minutes at a time.
- During pumping you can massage your breasts.
- If possible, keep your child close to you while pumping.
- Do not add milk that is dripping from the other breast into the expressed breast milk.
- Breast milk is expressed into special plastic bags, which you can get from the breast milk donor bank.
- Fill the bag only three quarters full, as the milk expands when frozen.
- Breast milk expressed within a 24-hour period can be mixed before being placed in the freezer.
- Close the bag correctly.
- Write the donor code and the date on which the breast milk was expressed on the bag.
- Place the bag in the freezer (-18°C).

Cleaning the breast pump

- After each use, rinse the parts of the pump with warm water to remove any milk residue.
- Wash the breast pump parts in warm water and add a little detergent, if desired
- Rinse thoroughly.
- Dry the breast pump parts on a clean towel.
- Boil any parts of the pump that have been in contact with breast milk for three (3) minutes once a day, and then dry them on a clean towel.

Transporting breast milk

Please bring your breast milk to the registration office of the Women's Clinic of East Tallinn Central Hospital (Ravi St. 18) on the ground floor of the RB-block once a week or once every two (2) weeks. Breast milk must be transported in a clean, cold container. It is important that the breast milk arrives at the breast milk donor bank frozen, and that all bags bear the donor code and the date on which the milk was expressed.

What happens to breast milk at the breast milk donor bank?

All breast milk delivered to the breast milk donor bank is subjected to a microbiological test to check for bacterial growth. It is then thawed, coded, and its nutritional value is determined. It is then pasteurised (heat treated) for 30 minutes at 62.5°C. After pasteurisation, the breast milk is frozen for preservation.

If the results of the microbiological tests fail to meet the required standards, hygiene aspects and the handling of the breast milk will be discussed with you. A new microbiological sample will then be taken from the next donated batch of breast milk.

Data collected during breast milk donation and conditions for the processing thereof

As a breast milk donor, you have the right to the confidentiality. Donated breast milk is coded, so that outsiders cannot identify you.

In connection with breast milk donation, East Tallinn Central Hospital collects your personal and health data. You have the right to access the data and request that corrections be made at any time. All data collected about you at the time of donating breast milk, including other health data, will be kept confidential.

The retention periods for data certifying the provision of healthcare services are provided by law. The data protection conditions of East Tallinn Central Hospital can be found at https://www.itk.ee/hospital/public documents/data protection. Pursuant to the Procurement, Handling and Transplantation of Cells, Tissues and Organs Act, a hospital is required to preserve the documents necessary for ensuring the traceability of cells, tissues and organs for 30 years, and documents concerning safety and quality for 10 years after the clinical use or destruction of cells, tissues, or organs.

If you would like to become a donor, you must agree to provide the hospital with the right to request information about your health condition from other health care providers, which is necessary for breast milk donation.

Any personal data collected will be processed in accordance with the Personal Data Protection Act and Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation) (OJ L 119, 04.05.2016, p. 1–88). This data may only be disclosed to the contracting authority, the handler, the transplanter and any other individuals or entities to whom it is necessary in order for them to fulfil their legal obligations.

If you have a sincere wish to donate breast milk, please contact the breast milk donor bank at **emapiimapank [at] itk.ee**, so that we can schedule an appointment with you**.**

ITK1296

Approved by the decision of the Medical and Nursing Care Quality Commission of *Aktsiaselts Ida-Tallinna Keskhaigla* on 17.12.2025 (Protocol No. 2.2-8/10-25)