



NorthernStar

MOTHERS MILK BANK

ABOUT NORTHERNSTAR MILK BANK

NorthernStar Mothers Milk Bank is Canada's only community-based milk bank. As a charitable organization, NorthernStar screens breastfeeding mothers as milk donors, accepting their excess milk as donations to be pasteurized in the laboratory and dispensed to sick babies in hospitals and in the community. We believe, and science endorses, that donor human milk is the best option for any baby and that all babies should have access to the life-saving nutrients of donor human milk. As advocates and champions for healthy babies, our goal is to connect donor human milk with as many sick and fragile babies as possible.

NORTHERNSTAR BELIEVES

- We are in the business of saving lives.
Babies who are born prematurely can thrive when given donor human milk – the milk from donor breastfeeding mothers.
- We want to give every sick and fragile baby the best chance possible.
Research supports that babies who receive donor human milk build critical immunity and are at a reduced risk of life-long illness.
- We should think of donor human milk the same way as we do medicine.
What's in breast milk can help babies receive more nutrients and develop faster. It provides natural antibodies that help babies resist illnesses.
- We need a community-based solution for babies in need.
Our agency screens breastfeeding women with excess milk who choose to donate for selfless reasons. You can hear for yourself, first hand by visiting our website.
- Our commitment to safety is evident in our process.
From our screening of donor mothers, to our state-of-the art lab, we're committed to the highest safety standard in our field. See our video to learn more.

HOW IT WORKS AT NORTHERNSTAR

To meet the demand, NorthernStar Mothers Milk Bank is constantly in need of healthy breastfeeding mothers who have excess milk. The milk, which we pasteurize and dispense, is only available by prescription. This ensures it goes directly to the babies who will benefit the most from its life-saving elements. Approximately 75-80 per cent of our donor human milk goes to the neonatal intensive care units in Alberta and across Canada.

ABOUT DONOR HUMAN MILK (DHM)

The medical community endorses the use of donor human milk:

"In situations where mothers' own milk is not available, provision of pasteurized, screened donor milk is the next best option particularly for ill, or high-risk infants."

World Health Organization/UNICEF Joint Statement

"Every mother has the right to information on the benefits of human milk, both maternal and banked pasteurized donor milk"

United Nations, 1989

"The preferred nutrition of the newborn is their own mother's milk. When this is not available or is limited, pasteurized human donor breast milk is a recommended alternative for hospitals neonates."

Canadian Pediatric Society

"Human milk is species specific and provides health, nutritional, immunological, developmental, social, economic and environmental benefits."

American Academy of Pediatrics

"Human milk provides optimal nutrition, promotes normal growth and development, and reduces the risk of illness and disease. The health benefits, including long-term decreased risk of a wide range of illnesses and infections lasts beyond infancy."
Pediatric Clinics of North America

ABOUT OUR MILK DROPS

Milk Drop locations, formerly milk depots, allow donor mothers outside the Calgary area to safely and conveniently drop off their milk. Milk Drops, which are located in hospitals and health care facilities, ensure the safe handling, storage and transport of donated human milk. Milk Drops are strategically located within the Prairie Provinces to support areas of high donor traffic.

Any mother who has a NorthernStar ID Number and is on the approved donor list may use a milk drop. At the time of drop off, the donation is logged and milk is secured using standardized collection criteria. Each container is labeled with the date and name or ID number. For redundancy, the donor number is also recorded on the outside of the bag.

Any questions related to donated milk, mothers' health, ongoing donations, the collection and storage of milk is referred back to NorthernStar. Milk Drops do not act as an agency of the Milk Bank; their role is to facilitate the acceptance and transfer of donor human milk to the NorthernStar Milk Bank.

SUPPORTING NORTHERNSTAR

As our population grows, so does our need for support.

You don't have to be a breastfeeding mother to support the work of the milk bank. Financial gifts allow our organization to keep dispensing fees low, invest in technology, cover critical operational expenses and increase our ability to process and dispense pasteurized human donor milk in increasing numbers.

Please consider investing in our vision.

We are a team of health professionals that have seen the transformational work of donor human milk. We are advocates and champions of milk banking for sick babies. As we look for new ways to support the health of children, we're always looking for financial partners to help us meet a growing demand.

NorthernStar's Charitable Care fund is a great way to invest in our vision

For babies in the community whose families cannot afford the dispensing cost of donor human milk, charitable care is available. This fund, which is generated solely from individual, family and corporate donors, ensures families have access to donor human milk for their baby. 100% of funds raised for charitable care are used to cover the cost of milk for families in need.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Who donates milk to the milk bank?

Milk Bank donors are healthy, conscientious women who provide their milk for selfless reasons. They are most often nursing their own babies (who are under one year of age) and have excess milk to give. We also accept milk from bereaved mothers, which is a powerful way to leave a lasting legacy and support their grieving process.

How are donors screened?

Donors are screened for medical and life style history through the use of a verbal and written questionnaire, including a document from the donor's health care provider. All donors receive instruction in the collection and handling of their milk. Donors inform the milk bank if they become ill or have any change in their health status, to determine whether or when they can continue to donate.

How do you know the milk is safe to be used?

Frozen donor milk is thawed, tested, pooled and poured into bottles, then pasteurized at 62.5 C using the Holder method. The pasteurized milk is quickly cooled and then frozen at -20 C. Samples from individual donors' deposits prior to pasteurization and pooling, and from each batch of milk after pasteurization are tested by an independent laboratory for microbiological cultures. The tests are done to verify no heat resistant pathogens are present before pasteurization, and there is zero growth of bacteria after the heating process. Our process strictly follows the guidelines set forth by the Human Milk Banking Association of North America.