



Informal breastmilk sharing

Patient information

Women and Newborn Health Service is a Baby Friendly Health Initiative accredited hospital. This accreditation means we protect, promote and support breastfeeding, and help mothers to care for their babies. We strongly support a mother's ability to make informed choices when choosing how to feed their baby.

While we understand that some mothers may not be able to produce breastmilk, or enough breastmilk to meet their baby's need, we **do not recommend** informal breastmilk sharing due to the potential risks involved for the baby.

Informal breastmilk sharing is when breastmilk is given or bought from another lactating mother. This could be through the sharing of breastmilk with another mother in your friend or family group, or sourcing breastmilk through informal services such as breastmilk sharing groups on social media.

Sharing of breastmilk carries potential risks for your baby, including:

- The transmission of viruses, such as HIV and hepatitis C in rare cases, as well as other bacteria
- Exposure to medications, drugs or alcohol that could be in the breastmilk
- Feeding your baby contaminated breastmilk due to incorrect handling, storage or preparation.

Donor breastmilk may be offered to premature or very sick babies in hospitals across Australia that are connected with a formal milk bank service. Milk bank services collect donor milk which is then pasteurised and frozen. The pasteurisation process kills bacteria and other viruses that may be found in breastmilk. A microbiological sample is taken before and after the milk is pasteurised to ensure it is safe for the baby.

Use of shared breastmilk that has not undergone the screening and pasteurisation process by an accredited milk bank is not recommended.

We acknowledge that families may still choose to share breastmilk. If you choose to share breastmilk it is highly recommended that you research the risks involved to help you make an informed decision first.

For more information, visit [Australian Breastfeeding Association - Position statement on donor breastmilk](#)

Our team of International board-certified lactation consultants provide breastfeeding information and support for families via our helpline (08) 6458 1844.

The Australia Breastfeeding Association also provides a helpline with 24/7 support from qualified breastfeeding counsellors. Call 1800 686 268.



The information provided is for information purposes only. If you are a patient using this publication, you should seek assistance from a healthcare professional when interpreting these materials and applying them to your individual circumstances.



Women and Newborn Health Service
King Edward Memorial Hospital
📍 374 Bagot Road, Subiaco WA 6008
☎ (08) 6458 2222
🌐 www.kemh.health.wa.gov.au

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request.



We are proud to be a smoke-free site.
Thank you for not smoking or vaping in any buildings or on our grounds.