



January 2022

MILK DONATION AND HUMAN MILK SHARING

The first priority of LLLC is to help mothers and parents to nourish their babies at the breast. A second priority is to provide information and support when it is necessary for them to express and safely store and handle their own milk for their babies. When their own mother's milk is unavailable, babies may need human milk donated by others. According to the World Health Organization, donor milk is the best option following one's own expressed milk.

It is always important for the Leader to encourage parents to talk with knowledgeable health care professionals about their particular situation. If either or both in the breastfeeding dyad is hospitalized and feeding at the breast is not possible, the Leader would recommend that the parents dialogue with medical staff regarding possible hospital policies related to obtaining and using their own milk or donor milk.

When a Leader is contacted by someone seeking to acquire donated milk or to discuss personal options, the Leader's role is to respond with information and support, including information about the benefits and risks of such practices as induced lactation, relactation, wet-nursing, or cross-nursing. This discussion may include formal, commercial, or informal (peer-to-peer) forms of milk sharing, which are practiced in various ways around the world.

If a mother is interested in donating milk or in receiving donated milk, the Leader should urge investigation into the various ways of donating and acquiring human milk. The parent should be encouraged to make an informed decision that is best for the family and meets their cultural expectations. Leaders should never use their positions as LLLC Leaders to set up any type of milk-sharing network. A Leader may provide contact information for non-profit human milk banks, other regulated collection centres, and formal/medically supervised or informal milk-sharing networks. Protocols for the careful and safe collection and handling of human milk are the responsibility of milk banks and networks, and the Leader should encourage mothers and parents to evaluate these protocols. It is not the responsibility of LLLC Leaders or LLLC to license, recommend, or assess milk banks or networks, but to share information.

As with other lactation-related topics, Leaders are expected to keep up-to-date with current best practices and information for their locations.

(May 1997; June 2015; April 2017; January 2022)