

Milk Banking

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Milk banking is a crucial healthcare service dedicated to providing safe and carefully screened donor breastmilk to infants in need, supporting their optimal growth and development.

FROM DONOR TO RECIPIENT

What is a milk bank?

A milk bank collects breastmilk from mothers who have more than their babies need, then screens, pasteurises, and tests the milk, after which it is distributed to infants, where their mother's own milk is unavailable for a variety of reasons.

COMPLIANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY

How are milk banking standards set?

In Australia, all milk banks are guided by the Department of Health and Aged Care's Operational Guidelines for Milk Banks in Australia and New Zealand. We are also guided by the relevant State and Territory's Health departments' guidelines.

FROM WET NURSES TO MILK BANKS



Are Milk Banks something new? What's the history?

The practice of mothers assisting each other by nursing each other's infants has a deep historical root across many cultures. Wealthier families have historically hired wet nurses to breastfeed and care for their babies when the biological mother couldn't.

However, the concept of organised milk banks, as we know them today, took a major step forward in the early 20th century. The first recorded milk bank was established in Vienna, Austria, in 1909, known as the "Gouttes de lait" (or "Drops of Milk"). This pioneering institution collected, processed, and distributed donor breastmilk to infants in need, particularly those born prematurely or whose mothers couldn't breastfeed.

In 2006, Australia witnessed the opening of its first milk bank at the King Edward Memorial Hospital in Perth, marking a significant milestone in ensuring that Australian infants had access to safe and reliable donor breastmilk when required.

These historical milestones underscore the enduring commitment to providing optimal nutrition to babies, especially those facing unique challenges.

Today, milk banks worldwide continue to uphold these principles, adhering to strict standards and guidelines to ensure that every infant can benefit from human breastmilk.

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