

To Share or Not to Share

Toronto Public Health's Journey to Developing an Informal Breast Milk Sharing
Counselling Guideline

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What is Informal Breast Milk Sharing?

- Informal breast milk sharing is conducted directly between donors and recipients - friends, family, or individuals who meet on the internet
- Formal breast milk sharing is conducted through an established breast milk bank



Why is this an Issue for Toronto Public Health (TPH)?

- It is happening in Toronto
- Clients are asking TPH staff about it
- Identified as a gap during TPH's Baby-Friendly Initiative journey (2013)
- Health equity issue



Jana Reid ▸ Human Milk 4 Human Babies - SW Ontario

September 9 at 11:06am · 🌐

I have 20-30 oz in the freezer from Nov/Dec last year that needs a good home. My son would have been 14-16-ish months then. No dietary restrictions, drinks some caffeine and the odd glass of red wine. Location is Toronto @ Dundas/Dovercourt.

Like · Comment · Share



Human Milk 4 Human Babies - SW Ontario Hi Jana! Your offer has been reposted to the community, thanks!

<https://www.facebook.com/HM4HBSWO/posts/839828489374731>

September 9 at 3:14pm · Like



Mac Bumper Crop Hi Jana! I am very interested, please email me at jafellner@yahoo.com. My name is Jenny!

September 9 at 4:35pm · Like



Leah Joy Sent you a PM Jana!

September 10 at 10:53pm · Like

Post on Facebook Group Human Milk 4 Human Babies – SW Ontario



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graph LR; A((Issue Identified)) --> B((Evidence Reviewed)); B --> C((Legal Consult)); C --> D((Bioethical Consult)); D --> E((Guidelines));
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Issue Identified

Evidence Reviewed

Legal Consult

Bioethical Consult

Guidelines

Positions on Informal Breast Milk Sharing



Government
of Canada

Gouvernement
du Canada

Safety of Donor Human Milk in Canada

Health Canada recommends against the consumption of unprocessed DHM obtained from private sources such as the Internet or from private individuals. Health Canada recommends that Canadians consult their health care professional, should they have questions about breastfeeding or if they are considering obtaining human milk from an alternative source to determine if it is the best and safest option for their infant.



Reasons for Informally Sharing Breast Milk – Recipients

Recipients:

- Lactation problems
- Child / mother's health
- Adoption, fostering
- Concerns re: risks of human milk substitutes
- Unable to access banked breast milk
- Need for culturally appropriate breast milk



 **Human Milk 4 Human Babies - SW Ontario** shared Mélanie Peters's post.
December 9, 2014 at 9:10pm · 🌐

Mélanie #needsmilk in #Toronto. Can you help?

 **Mélanie Peters** ▸ **Human Milk 4 Human Babies - SW Ontario**

I live in Toronto and like everyone who visits this page, I'm passionate about breastfeeding. Unfortunately, I have breast cancer and will be undergoing a bilateral mastectomy shortly after the birth of my first baby, due December 18. I'm blown away by the generosity of the members of this network and I would be so very grateful if I could provide my baby with breastmilk. I'm happy to contribute supplies and can pick up in most areas within the extended GTA. Thank you!

Like · Comment · Share · 👍 6 🗨 6

👍 Becki Main, Neshka Muchalska, Michelle Laura and 3 others like this. [Top Comments ▾](#)

 **Sarah Fecteau** Melanie I'm in Oshawa and have a frozen stash and pump daily. Please message me and if you don't mind a 40 minute drive it's all yours.
👍 1 · December 10, 2014 at 5:29am

 **Kristina Kelly** Way to go mama! I wish I was closer!
December 16, 2014 at 3:48pm

 **Chantale Ritchie** I'm from barrie with lots to share
December 15, 2014 at 10:46am

 **Jessi Pallister** Pm sent
December 10, 2014 at 4:49am

 **Krystyna Tini** Sent you a pm
December 10, 2014 at 2:33am

 **Ashley Smith** Oh I wish I lived a little closer to the GTA 😊
December 10, 2014 at 1:53am

Reasons for Informally Sharing Breast Milk - Donor

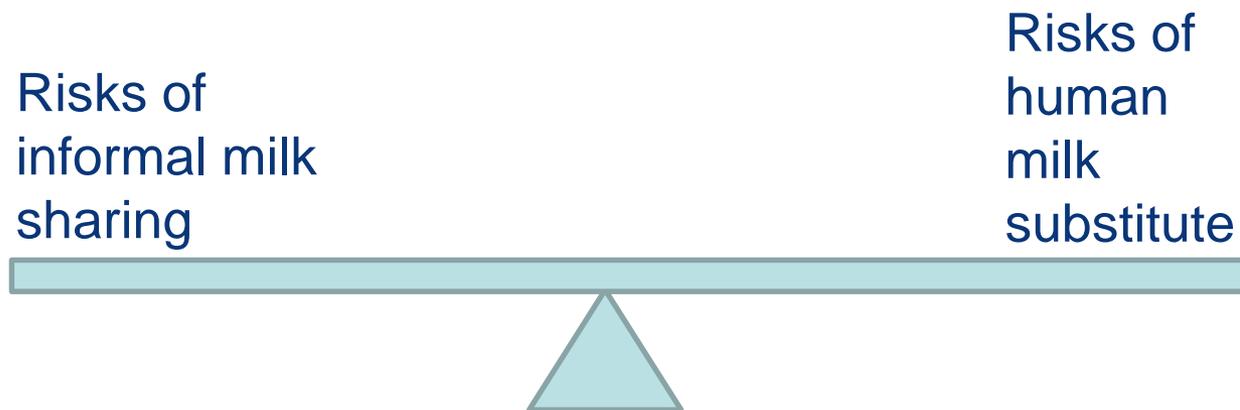
Donor:

- Altruistic reasons
- Excess production / not wanting to waste breast milk
- Value of breast milk
- Belief in dangers of human milk substitutes
- Not able to access breast milk bank



Health Risks of Informal Breast Milk Sharing

- Infectious disease transmission
- Bacterial contamination
- Exposure to drugs, alcohol and environmental contaminants



Strategies to Reduce Risks of Informal Breast Milk Sharing

- Informed consent
- Questionnaires and screening of donors
- Proper handling and storage of breast milk
- Pasteurization and flash heating



- Liability concerns
- National health organizations advise against informal breast milk sharing
- Consider referring clients to reputable organizations that support informal breast milk sharing; with emphasis that TPH does not endorse the information



- Provide information on harms and benefits of each alternative
 - Promotes autonomy of individuals
 - Respect to persons
 - Client and family centred care
- Risks associated with inaction



Informal Breast Milk Sharing Guideline



Informal Breast Milk Sharing Guideline

Guidelines #: 10300 – GD - 0004

1. PURPOSE

This counselling guideline provides key messages and interventions to support staff in facilitating discussions, **raised by clients**, to explore the issue of informal breast milk sharing; and support consistent Toronto Public Health (TPH) messaging.

2. APPLIES TO

Child Health and Development (CHD) and Intake public health nurses (PHNs) and dietitians. All other CHD staff (e.g., family home visitors, community nutrition educators) and other TPH divisions should be aware of this guideline, and refer to a CHD or Intake PHN or dietitian for further client teaching.

Key Messages

- Informal breast milk sharing - directly between donor and recipient.
- TPH advises against it.
- **When raised by the client** - facilitate discussion, support informed decision making.
- Strategies to reduce the risks: informed consent, donor screening, proper handling and storage of breast milk, and pasteurization of breast milk.

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