

**September 2008  
Newsletter**

Welcome to our 12<sup>th</sup> Newsletter from the milk bank.

This year has been exceptionally busy, in the first half of 2008 we issued 491 litres of milk to units around Ireland. This milk helped 221 babies, of which there were 35 sets of twins and 9 sets of triplets. The bank also helped 5 babies with major gut problems to be allowed home, so they could be cared for in the community, with the support of family and friends. So far this year we have had a total of 108 donors helping us with our work.

This first half of the year has also been exceptionally sad. We have had a total of 15 mums donate to the bank, who had lost their babies. Most of these babies were very premature; at 24-26 weeks gestation and their milk has all been tested, processed, labelled and used in the Neo-Natal Units for very premature babies.

One mother showed exceptional courage when she phoned the bank. She had been told her baby would not survive after birth due to ANENCEPHALY. But in previous pregnancies she had always had loads of milk, and wanted to donate after this baby was born, so that some good came of this pregnancy.

Three little babies also did not survive due to major heart defects and their mum's milk has all gone off to help other tiny babies receiving heart surgery.

We have to say thank you again for the remarkable bravery shown by some of our donors. One mother who had donated after her last baby was born, asked the hospital breastfeeding nurse to contact us. She had left milk in 3 hospital units, her

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2<sup>nd</sup> baby was not well at birth, it had difficulty breathing and was transferred to the high dependence unit where they scanned the baby and found it had a brain tumour. The baby was transferred again in the hope that surgery could be performed, but the tumour was in such a difficult place, surgery was not possible.

The mother had collected a large volume of milk in a short space of time, it was her wish that it be donated to the milk bank, so that it could be then sent back to the Children's hospital; to help the babies with heart and gut problems, needing help at that time.

As always we would like to tell you some of the stories of where the donor milk has gone to:

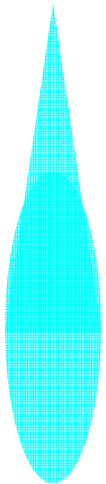
Baby Rose- started having problems when mum's milk supply failed. She started to lose weight drastically. All types of formula feeds were tried, but little Rose kept on losing weight and eventually was hospitalised, as she was so poorly.

Her parents had also tried her on all sorts of solid foods, pureed, but her gut was not able to cope with these either.

After she was hospitalised it was decided to provide this child, now a toddler, with donor milk. This was possible due to the fact that we had such good donors all around the county helping us.

Rose turned the corner, she started to gain weight and slowly seems to be managing to tolerate more foods, as human milk helps guts grow, although she is still having some difficulties with her digestion.

Now thanks to work of all our donors Rose is looking well.



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Baby Lily- was born with her stomach on the outside. She has major problems with her gut too short. She was so poorly at birth that her mother's milk dried up due to stress.

She has had to be fed by TPN (feeding into her abdomen by bag feed). For months she was given very small quantities of breastmilk every hour to help her gut mature and grow.

Now she is tolerating breastmilk; as it is the only food she can tolerate, by mouth.

She is now a year old, still in need of our donors help and her parents have asked us to thank you all for your very much appreciated hard work.

Triplets-John, James and Issac were all born at 28 weeks gestation, but being triplets it was difficult to find cots for them all in the same Neo-Natal Unit, so they were split up in two hospitals, 3 hours drive apart for 6 weeks.

Their parents were travelling for many hours a week to see their new family, and due to tiredness, high mileage and stress, mum was not able to produce all the milk that she needed to keep her babies well and safe from problems such as NEC (the gut disorder which kills so many premature babies). So the two units the babies were in received donated milk for the boys.

We are delighted to hear that they are all now home and doing well, keeping their parents very busy.

Baby Alfie- was supplied with donated breast milk as he had developed NEC and the hospital wanted to make sure that this did not happen again. But mum could not provide her own milk as she needed Chemotherapy. Donor milk was provided until he was over the risk time of NEC.

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One mother of twins wrote to us as she wanted to say thank you to everybody who had helped her 28 week gestation twins. She told us the stories of the other mothers in the neo-natal unit were struggling to produce the milk needed for their premature babies; but were reassured by knowing that there was donor milk to back up their hard work for their babies, if it was needed.

Good news here to as new research has recently been published to say that donated breastmilk does help to prevent NEC if mother's own milk is not available.

Channel 4 recently broadcast a programme about mothers sharing milk. This programme did not highlight the way that Milk Banks run. As a result of this screening The United Kingdom Association for Milk Banking has now changed it's mission statement to:

"UKAMB promotes and supports the accountable provision of safe, rigorously screened donor breastmilk.

We are always glad to hear your stories, as they may help make up the next newsletter.

**We always like to hear from new or prospective donors, or parents who have received milk for their babies. We can be**

**contacted at**

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