Handling of Human Milk - To Glove or Not to Glove?

To use gloves or not to use gloves?

The question often arises from health care providers about whether to use gloves when handling human milk. For providers, there are two main issues: protecting the milk from the person handling it AND protecting the handler from any potential infectious agents in the milk.

Hand washing before handling mom's own milk or donor human milk is highly recommended by the Human Milk Banking Association of North America in their publication Best Practice for Expressing, Storing and Handling Human Milk, however, "wearing gloves is not recommended for handling human milk except when large volumes are handled such as during processing milk in a donor human milk bank." The Occupational Safety and Health Administration, OSHA, concurs with this statement.

Occupational exposure has not been implicated in the transmission of HIV, hepatitis or other viruses from human milk handling. In addition, wearing gloves is becoming more prudent as more and more hospitals are adding milk labs or nutrition centers that handle large volumes of milk.

Wearing gloves may give a health care worker a false sense of security which may increase the contamination of the milk.

In the ISO 7 certified lab at MMB, our lab techs wear gloves which are changed often and in between batches of milk and after touching anything. They also wear lab coats, masks, hair coverings and shoe covers protecting our precious donor milk from any possible outside contamination. Gloves are also worn by our shipping and logging personnel when touching the frozen bags of milk to prevent any contamination when the milk is received and logged.

Milk protection and safety is one of the highest priorities at Mothers' Milk Bank - and we encourage you to think over the question: "To glove or not to glove?"

Sources:
Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)
Human Milk Banking Association of North America
Prescribe Donor Milk

Donor human milk is the first choice for all babies anytime moms' own milk is unavailable. It is essential for any baby with a weakened immune system or special dietary needs. To learn more about prescribing donor human milk from Mothers' Milk Bank to infants in your care, please visit our website to view a short introductory video.

Potential Milk Donors

Human milk is a gift that lasts a lifetime and, nationally, there is a growing demand for our babies. We rely on the generosity of donors and are thankful for the healthcare providers who encourage patients with excess milk to become milk donors to meet the constant demand - thank you. **If you have a patient with an established milk supply and more milk than her healthy baby needs, please have her contact us.** Women interested in becoming donors should visit our website for more information.

About Mothers' Milk Bank

A nonprofit program of Rocky Mountain Children's Health Foundation, Mothers' Milk Bank (MMB) collects, processes, tests, analyzes and provides donor human milk to babies across the country. Babies who receive the milk may be premature or have severe illnesses and need human milk to thrive.

MMB consistently provides more milk to NICUs than any other nonprofit milk bank in North America and adheres to the strict guidelines of the Human Milk Banking Association of North America.

Dedicated to babies. Dedicated to quality. Dedicated to safety.

Mothers' Milk Bank | 303.869.1888 | milkbankcolorado.org

A program of

Rocky Mountain Children's Health Foundation

STAY CONNECTED: