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## Two new depots open to allow people to donate milk for vulnerable babies

Interior Health is making it easier than ever to donate human milk to help other moms and babies with the introduction of new depots in Kelowna and Kamloops.

While many breastfeeding mothers in Interior Health have donated milk through periodic milk bank drives in the community, the introduction of collection depots at the Kamloops Health Unit and the Community Health Centre in Kelowna will help more people become donors and will allow them to donate on a continuous basis.

“Two new milk depots for Kelowna and Kamloops will help infants in the very first, fragile stages of their lives, and are incredibly important for those first few days,” said Health Minister Adrian Dix. “I am proud of Interior Health for making this happen and thank the selfless donors who provide milk to meet the ever-growing demand.”

Human milk has many health-promoting properties for babies, including antibodies to fight infection and disease. Human milk is best for all babies. It is especially important for sick and very tiny babies.

“Screened and pasteurized donor human milk is often in high demand at hospitals across the province for premature or sick infants. While a mother’s own milk is always the first choice, pasteurized donor human milk is extremely beneficial for at-risk newborns, such as those born prematurely,” said Rob Finch, Interior Health’s Maternal, Newborn, Child & Youth Network Director. “Our sincere thanks to all those who have supported milk drives in the past for your continued dedication to the provincial milk bank and the babies it serves.”

Interior Health joins the provincial network of human milk depots rounding out the number to 28 milk depots, supporting the Provincial Milk Bank at BC Women’s Hospital + Health Centre along with the five other B.C. health authorities. The depots provide a place to drop off raw, frozen milk, which is transported to the BC Women’s Provincial Milk Bank in Vancouver. Donors are pre-screened and the donated milk is pasteurized at the provincial milk bank and distributed to hospitals throughout B.C.

“We are thrilled to have all of the health authorities support the provincial milk bank,” said Stephanie Gillespie, International Board Certified Lactation Consultant at BC Women’s. “We supply mother’s milk to the most fragile babies across B.C. and with the addition of these new milk depots, mothers from the Interior can more easily donate to families in need.”

Pasteurized human milk is used at Interior Health neonatal intensive care units in Kamloops and Kelowna.

“Breastfeeding Matters in Kamloops would like to extend both congratulations and gratitude for the many women and friends/family members in the Kamloops area, including Ashcroft and Salmon Arm, who have freely given time and support through pumping and storing breast milk and travelling to provide donor milk for the smallest members of our communities,” said Joanne Juras of Breastfeeding Matters Kamloops. The Kamloops organization and OK Breastfeeding in Kelowna have shipped hundreds of litres of breastmilk over the years.

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The BC Women's Provincial Milk Bank has been in operation for 45 years. It has helped tens of thousands of babies and children, screened more than 6,500 donors and processed 60,000 litres of milk.

New donors are always welcome to the program. Donors must complete the Provincial Milk Bank's pre-screening process before they can donate their milk. Screening consists of a telephone interview to confirm potential donors are in good health, not taking select medications and/or supplements, and willing to undergo blood testing.

For information contact call 604-875-3743 or visit [bcwomens.ca](http://bcwomens.ca) and search 'milk bank.'

*Interior Health is committed to promoting healthy lifestyles and providing a wide range of quality health-care services to more than 750,000 people living across B.C.'s vast interior. For more information, visit [www.interiorhealth.ca](http://www.interiorhealth.ca), follow us on Twitter [@Interior\\_Health](https://twitter.com/Interior_Health), follow us on Instagram [@weareIH](https://www.instagram.com/weareIH), or like us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/InteriorHealth](https://www.facebook.com/InteriorHealth).*

*BC Women's Hospital + Health Centre, a program of the Provincial Health Services Authority, is the province's only facility dedicated to the health of women, newborns and families. It is one of the country's busiest maternity centres, delivering more than 7,000 babies annually, and serves as the provincial resource for high-risk maternity care, as well as the most highly-specialized centre for the largest neonatal intensive care unit in BC. More than 50,000 women are seen annually through its specialized women and family programs, which include world-class services in sexual assault care, medical genetics, HIV care, reproductive and sexual health, maternal substance dependency, osteoporosis and complex chronic diseases. For more information, visit [www.bcwomens.ca](http://www.bcwomens.ca) or follow us on Twitter [@BCWomensHosp](https://twitter.com/BCWomensHosp).*

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**Photo caption:** Okanagan Breastfeeding presents donated milk from a very successful Oct. 9 milk drive to Kelowna's new Milk Depot. In the photo (L to R): Tina Parkes, Public Health Nursing; Alana Young, Supervisor Administrative Services; Cheryl Martelli, Coordinator Administrative Services; Rita and Ria Maczek, mom and baby; Lindley Granger, Dula and OK Breastfeeding representative; Nicki Albrecht, Lactation Educator; Meggie Ross, Public Health Nursing.