COVID-19 STATEMENT

The Milk Bank COVID-19 Statement  
Current and Accurate as of Publication – March 12, 2020

The Milk Bank, like all public health organizations, is closely monitoring developments related to the outbreak of the 2019 Novel Coronavirus. Now is a particularly difficult time for both the vulnerable families we serve as well as the health care partners providing them with exceptional care. The Milk Bank remains dedicated to providing lifesaving milk to critically ill infants.

The Milk Bank follows the strictest clinical standards every day and, in fact, is accredited by The Human Milk Banking Association of North America. Safeguards informed by both the CDC and FDA ensure the quality and integrity of every bottle processed and include comprehensive donor screening, validated pasteurization, and independent, third-party microbiological analysis.

While research specific to COVID-19 is still emerging, characteristics of similar viruses such as SARS and MERS inform our work. This newly identified virus, severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2, now COVID-19) was named due to the genetic similarities to the SARS coronavirus. Studies have documented complete heat inactivation of genetically similar viruses such as SARS and MERS. All milk dispensed by The Milk Bank undergo heat treatment using the Holder pasteurization method of 62.5°C for 30 minutes.

Additionally, research has consistently demonstrated that breastmilk provides significant immunological, nutritional, physiological and psychological benefits that protect babies against many illnesses and last well beyond infancy.

In times of crisis, it is critical to rely on the most current and accurate information and to mobilize efforts to support public health. You can help families with infants during this time in the following ways.

- Encourage healthy, eligible mothers to donate milk to The Milk Bank. Hospitals and NICUs serve medically fragile infants 24/7, 365 days a year, even during a crisis. As we consider a possible increase in demand for donor milk, we are continuing efforts to carefully screen new donor mothers. Reinforce that The Milk Bank can ship materials and supplies if donor mothers are unable to bring milk to a depot.
- Being familiar with CDC guidance specifically for breastfeeding and pregnant women diagnosis with COVID-19. While much is still unknown, the virus has not been detected in breast milk.
- Reaching out by phone, text or email to friends with young children. It can be a frightening and confusing time for families and typical resources may become less accessible. Share details about support services that remain open such as free lactation consulting with The Milk Bank.
- Minimizing contagion by practicing social distancing and washing your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Making a financial investment to The Milk Bank and join our efforts to combat infant mortality and promote public health.

The Milk Bank has always safely served the most vulnerable among us. We will continue to work with Departments of Health, the CDC, the FDA, and HMBANA as the situation evolves to protect and maintain the availability of pasteurized human donor milk.