Donor Human Milk

Human milk is the ideal nutrition for babies. A mother's own milk is always best, but if that is not available, donor human milk may be the next best option to feed your baby. Donor milk from a certified milk bank is carefully screened and prepared to make sure it is healthy and safe.

Benefits of human milk

Mother's milk contains a special and strong combination of nutrients that are important for baby's health. It supports growth and development as well as boosts the baby’s ability to fight infection. It is easy to digest and can promote the overall health of the baby's digestive system.

When a mother cannot provide her own milk, donor human milk may temporarily meet the baby's medical and nutritional needs. Infant formula is another option, but does not offer the same infection fighting benefits.

About donor milk

Donor human milk from a certified milk bank is specially processed, so it can be given safely to any baby. Ohio State Wexner Medical Center uses donor milk from OhioHealth Mothers’ Milk Bank.

Mothers’ Milk Bank only accepts milk from volunteers who:

- Are healthy, non-smoking women.
- Have passed a medical, dietary, and lifestyle screening.
- Have been tested for HIV, human T-cell leukemia-lymphoma virus (HTLV), Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, and Syphilis.

The milk is pasteurized, or heat treated, and cultured to be certain it does not contain any bacteria or diseases. We do not recommend unpasteurized human milk that is not from a certified milk bank.

Who can get donor milk

The Ohio State Wexner Medical Center donor milk program is open for mothers who:

- Have a baby who has been exclusively breastfed and she wants to continue.
- Agrees to pump her own milk in addition to giving donor human milk to her infant at each feeding.
- Has signed a consent form in her medical record.
- Has a doctor’s order for donor human milk.
General program guidelines

- Donor human milk is intended to be used as a supplement if the mother’s direct breastfeeding is not successful or she is not able to express her own milk to give to her infant.
- The use of donor human milk is temporary until feeding with the mother’s own milk is successful. Donor human milk will not meet the long term nutritional needs of the infant.
- To protect the Mother’s milk supply, she should be pumping or expressing her own milk when giving donor milk to her infant. It is best if this happens with each feeding. When available, the mother’s own milk should be given before donor milk. It is fine to pump after offering donor milk and to save that milk to give before or along with the next feeding.
- Donor human milk will not be given to infants who are in the nursery at night. If the infant needs to be fed, he or she will be brought to the mother for her to attempt to breastfeed or to express milk before giving the infant donor human milk.
- Though donor human milk can be purchased from the OhioHealth Mothers’ Milk Bank after leaving the hospital, it will not be supplied by the hospital after the mother and infant are discharged to go home.

For more information

Talk to a member of the medical team, your baby’s doctor, or your lactation consultant if you have questions about the use of donor human milk for your infant.

You can also learn more about banked donor human milk at OhioHealth Mothers’ Milk Bank by calling 614-566-0630, or visiting the website at www.ohiohealth.com/locations/womens-health/mothers-milk-bank.