Donor Human Milk for Your Baby

Human milk is best for your baby’s nutrition. If you are not able to provide human milk and have a premature or hospitalized baby in our NICU unit, donor human milk is a safe feeding choice.

About Donor Milk

Donor human milk is human milk from healthy women who are lactating. Studies show that human milk is easier for babies to digest and the milk has active growth hormones and can improve the baby’s immune system. Human milk donors do not receive any money for their donation.

For the safety of the babies who get breast milk, donors must go through a screening process. All mothers must meet guidelines for donation from the Human Milk Banking Association of North America (HMBANA) and state regulators. Donors:

- Talk with a health care professional about their medical history.
- Complete a written health history and lifestyle survey.
- Do not take any medicines that are not approved by the milk bank staff, including over the counter (OTC) medicines.
- Do not smoke or drink alcohol.
- Have doctor’s approval for milk donation.
- Have tested negative for HIV, Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, HTLV and Syphilis.

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How Donor Milk Helps My Baby

Babies fed human milk have some protection from a serious bowel infection called necrotizing enterocolitis (NEC) that can occur in premature babies. There is no medicine or formula that can give this protection.

Human milk has special elements not found in formula to help your baby. Human milk:

- Protects your baby from other infections
- Provides optimal nutrition
- Improves digestion
- Prevents allergies
- Improves brain development
- Improves eye function

Feeding Your Baby

If you would like your baby to receive donor milk, you will be asked to sign a consent form. Ask questions that you have about donor milk. Your baby may be fed through a tube before he or she is ready to latch onto a nipple. Talk with your baby’s nurse or lactation consultant about feeding.

How the Milk is Used

When donor human milk is used, the milk of several mothers is mixed together. Then the milk is heated to a very high temperature or pasteurized for a short time. By heating the milk, bacteria are destroyed and the milk is safe for babies. Other elements of the milk are also destroyed in pasteurization, but many of the benefits are still there for babies.

Talk to your doctor or others on your health care team if you have questions. You may request more written information from the Library for Health Information at (614) 293-3707 or email: health-info@osu.edu.