



Human breast milk is the very best food for human babies.

If you decide to use donor milk, you will be asked to sign a consent form. Your baby will then be fed donor milk until your own milk production increases, or until your baby reaches the age when the risk of NEC is lower.

Who can I talk with about using donor milk for my baby?

NICU doctors, nurses, neonatal nurse practitioners, and lactation consultants are happy to talk with you about your questions or concerns.

If your baby is at **UWMC**, call:

- NICU: 206-598-4606
- Lactation Services: 206-598-4628

If your baby is at **UW/VMC**, call:

- NICU: 425-251-5197
- Lactation Services: 206-228-3440, ext. 2526

To Learn More

Visit these websites to learn more about using donor human milk:

- Human Milk Banking Association of North America: www.hmbana.org
- “Breastfeeding and the Use of Human Milk,” policy statement by the American Academy of Pediatrics: <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/129/3/e827.full#content-block>

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns.

- UWMC Lactation Services: 206-598-4628
- UW/VMC Lactation Services: 206-228-3440, ext. 2526

UW Medicine

Donor Human Milk Program

This booklet explains the donor human milk program and why some mothers use donor human milk.

Human breast milk is best for human babies.

Human breast milk is the very best food for human babies. Breast milk has special health benefits that help babies grow healthy and strong. Babies who are fed breast milk resist infections and some illnesses better than babies who are fed formula.



Even when mothers do everything right, they still may not have enough breast milk to feed their babies.

At the hospital, we will encourage you to express your breast milk. Some of the keys to reaching your highest milk production are to express milk:

- In the first hour after your baby is born
- 8 times a day
- By hand and by using a hospital-quality pump
- While you are looking at pictures of your baby

Holding your baby skin-to-skin (kangaroo care) can also help improve your milk supply.

If you do not have enough of your own milk, Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) staff may talk with you about using donor human milk.

What is donor human milk?

Donor milk is breast milk donated by mothers who have extra milk. They donate it to accredited non-profit milk banks that follow strict guidelines for handling and processing human milk.

Is donor milk safe?

All mothers who donate milk are screened for diseases like AIDS, hepatitis, and syphilis. They also must not smoke, drink, or take medicines regularly.

How is the milk processed?

Milk from several donors is mixed together. It is then:

- *Pasteurized* (heated) to kill any germs.
- Tested to make sure it is free of germs.
- Frozen and shipped (still frozen) overnight to the hospital.
- Stored in a freezer in the NICU until it is needed.

Why is it better to use donor human milk instead of formula?

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that all preterm infants receive human milk. This is because human milk:

- Helps prevent or fight *necrotizing enterocolitis* (NEC), an intestinal infection that can be fatal. Infants who are fed human milk instead of formula have a lower risk of getting NEC.
- Contains growth factors and hormones that help a baby's development. Formula does not give these benefits.



Human milk contains many things that help a baby's health and development.

Are there any risks from using donor milk?

Even though donor milk is carefully screened, there is a very small risk that an infectious germ could be passed to your baby by the donor milk.

When is donor milk used?

Even when mothers do everything right, they may not be able to collect enough breast milk to feed their babies. This is often true in the first few days after birth.

If your doctor wants to prescribe donor milk, your baby's doctor or nurse practitioner will talk with you first about it and answer your questions. It is your choice whether or not to use donor milk.