

Frequently asked questions

What is pasteurized human donor milk?

Breast milk that has been donated to a milk bank and pasteurized in a heat treatment process that eliminates harmful bacteria/ viruses. The pasteurization process is similar to that used to ensure the safety of cow's milk. Pasteurized donor milk goes through a rigorous testing process to ensure its safety.

Does pasteurization change breast milk?

Most of the unique nutrients and components (such as immune factors) found only in human breast milk are retained after pasteurization. There are slightly lower levels of some nutrients however all babies in the NICU have their growth monitored.

How does the Milk Bank maintain high standards of quality?

The Milk Bank follows guidelines set by the Human Milk Banking Association of North America (HMBANA) and public health regulations governing the handling, processing and storage of food.

Who will be offered donor milk?

Fragile, hospitalized babies, including low birth weight babies when there is not enough of their own mother's milk. If donor milk supplies are limited, the highest risk babies will receive donor milk. For more information, please talk with your baby's Doctor, Nurse Practitioner, Lactation Consultant, Nurse or Dietitian.

When mother's own milk is not available or is limited, pasteurized donor milk is recommended by The Canadian Paediatric Society for sick hospitalized infants.

Funded in part by the
Government of Ontario

The Rogers Hixon
Ontario Human Milk Bank
is a non-profit organization
and member of the Human
Milk Banking Association
of North America.

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What Parents Should Know

Human donor milk



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**Sinai
Health**

Rogers Hixon Ontario
Human Milk Bank

The Rogers Hixon Ontario Human Milk Bank

Donated human milk can help save a hospitalized baby's life. Studies have shown that it reduces the rate of medical complications and gives sick babies a fighting chance.

Due to medical complications, most preterm babies in hospitals across Ontario don't have access to a full supply of their mother's own milk, putting them at risk of life-threatening complications.

The Rogers Hixon Ontario Human Milk Bank, located at Mount Sinai Hospital, collects, pasteurizes and distributes donated human milk to hospitals across Ontario and is given by prescription to the most vulnerable babies.



Benefits of feeding babies donor milk

While a mother's milk is the gold standard for her baby, many mothers of extremely vulnerable hospitalized babies are unable to provide the necessary volume of milk.

Pasteurized donor milk is recommended by The Canadian Paediatric Society and endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics and the World Health Organization.

- Protects against serious life threatening infections
- Protects against necrotizing enterocolitis - a severe bowel condition associated with preterm babies
- Easily digested

Donor milk is meant as a temporary supplement for your baby. A mother's own milk is always the first choice as it provides optimal growth and development.

"Every parent wants the best start for their baby. When mothers own milk is not available, human donor milk offers the babies protection against life-threatening illnesses so that they can become stronger and healthier."

Dr. Sharon Unger
Medical Director

Frequently asked questions

How long will babies receive donor milk?

Every effort will be made to feed the baby with mother's own milk prior to using donor milk. When there is not enough of mother's own milk, babies may receive donor milk for several weeks during their hospitalization.

At the end of this time, if there is not enough of mother's own milk, babies will be transitioned to an appropriate formula.

What are the risks of using donor milk?

The baby's growth will be monitored as some babies grow slower, and may require nutritional supplementation.

In decades of human milk banking worldwide, there have been no published reports of infectious diseases being caused by properly pasteurized human donor milk. The risk of infection, however slight, cannot be reduced to zero just as is the case with the use of blood products.

Who donates breast milk?

Healthy mothers who want to help babies in need and who are able to pump excess milk. Women are only eligible to donate milk after a rigorous screening (similar to the process used for donating blood).

Does a mother receive payment for a milk donation?

No. Milk donations are strictly on a voluntary basis.