Intermountain® Healthcare

Pasteurized Human Milk

What is it?

Pasteurized human milk is donated human milk (breast milk, mother's milk) that comes from a milk bank and is specially processed so that it can be given to any baby.

When is it recommended?

Mother's milk is the best food for all babies. When a mother's own milk isn't available or usable for some reason, pasteurized human milk from a donor may be recommended for babies with special nutritional needs. For example, pasteurized human milk is sometimes recommended for babies receiving care in a hospital **NICU (neonatal intensive care unit)**, such as preterm or sick babies. It may also be recommended for babies who can only tolerate human milk — for example, babies who are allergic to infant formula or have medical conditions that require a diet of human milk.

If pasteurized human milk is recommended for your baby, a healthcare provider will discuss with you the specific reasons for the recommendation.

What are the benefits?

Studies show that mother's milk contains a unique and powerful combination of nutrients important for infant health. Mother's milk supports growth and development and boosts a baby's ability to fight infection. It's also easy to digest and can promote the overall health of a baby's digestive system.

Pasteurized human milk from a donor provides some of these health benefits, which are particularly valuable in a baby's first weeks of life. Research is being conducted to determine the long-term benefits of pasteurized human milk.

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Is pasteurized human milk safe?

Intermountain uses donated milk from a certified human milk bank. Although it's possible that donated human milk could transmit a harmful substance, **there has never been a known case of infection caused by milk from a certified human milk bank.** The bank safeguards the milk's safety through the measures described below.

Donors are carefully screened

Screening ensures that a woman who donates her milk to the milk bank is healthy, takes no regular medications, and has more than enough milk to meet her own baby's needs. She must be a non-smoker with no history of drug abuse, alcohol abuse, or other risky behavior. Her blood must test negative for certain infectious diseases. Once a woman is accepted as a donor, she must follow detailed instructions for safe handling of the milk she collects.

As you can see, it takes a strong commitment to be a human milk donor. Donors aren't paid and are motivated only by a desire to help babies like yours.

Donated milk is pasteurized and tested

Pasteurizing is a heating process that kills any harmful bacteria or viruses that may be in the milk. This process preserves most of the milk's nutrients, immune properties, and other healthy components. After pasteurization, the milk bank also tests the donated milk to further ensure that it's safe to feed a baby.

How long will my baby receive pasteurized human milk?

Some babies are given pasteurized human milk for only a week or so, while others require it for longer periods of time. It depends on several factors, including the reason for prescribing pasteurized human milk. Your baby's healthcare provider will tell you how long to give pasteurized human milk.

What if I want to breastfeed?

If you'd like to breastfeed your baby in the future, talk to your baby's healthcare provider at the hospital. You can also arrange to meet with a lactation consultant, a medical professional with special training in helping women breastfeed. These experts can support your efforts to build your own breast milk supply and help you and your baby make a transition to breastfeeding. They can also help you maintain your milk supply if you choose to express (pump) your milk to feed your baby.

Where can I learn more about the milk my baby receives — or about milk banking in general?

Intermountain uses pasteurized human milk from the Mothers' Milk Bank at Rocky Mountain Hospital for Children in Denver, Colorado. If you have any questions about the milk your baby receives, feel free to contact the Milk Bank directly at **(303) 869-1888.**

To learn more about human milk banking, visit the Human Milk Banking Association of North America website at **www.hmbana.org**.

If in the future you have an abundance of your own milk, please consider donating some of it. You can learn about donating milk through either of the two resources mentioned above.

If you have questions about feeding or any other aspect of your baby's care, talk to your baby's healthcare providers.

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