

Let's Talk About...

Pasteurized Human Breast Milk

Mother's milk is the best food for babies. However, sometimes a mother's own milk isn't available or usable, or your baby may have special nutritional needs. When this happens, your baby's healthcare provider may recommend using pasteurized human milk from a milk bank.

What is pasteurized human milk?

Pasteurized [PAST-chur-eyezd] human milk is breast milk donated to a milk bank and specially treated so it can be given to any baby. It is carefully screened and sterilized to ensure your baby is not exposed to any drugs or germs.

Some babies receive pasteurized human milk for only a week or so, while others need it longer. This depends on several things, including the reason the doctor prescribed pasteurized human milk.

What are the benefits of pasteurized human milk?

Donated mother's milk contains the same benefits as your own breastmilk, a powerful mix of nutrients that helps babies:

- Grow and develop
- Fight infections
- Maintain digestive health

Is pasteurized human milk safe?

Yes. Intermountain Healthcare providers and federal regulatory agencies like the FDA (Federal Drug Administration) and the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) recommend using donated milk from an approved human milk bank.

It is possible that donated human milk could transmit a harmful substance. However, there has never been a known case of infection caused by milk from a certified human milk bank.

When a mother's own milk is not available, a doctor may recommend pasteurized human milk from a donor for babies with special nutritional needs.



How do milk banks keep donated milk safe?

The bank keeps the milk safe by:

- **Carefully screening donors.** Screening ensures a woman who donates her milk is healthy, doesn't take any regular medicines, and has more than enough milk to meet her own baby's needs. She can't smoke, misuse drugs or alcohol, or take part in risky behavior. Her blood will be tested for certain infectious diseases. Once a woman is accepted as a donor, she must follow strict rules to safely keep the milk she collects.
- **Pasteurizing and testing donated milk.** Pasteurization is the process of heating milk enough to destroy any harmful bacteria or viruses. This does not hurt the milk's special nutrients, other healthy ingredients, or ability to fight disease. After pasteurization, the milk bank also tests the donated milk to make sure it's safe to feed a baby.

