

# Banked Human Milk: What You Need To Know

## What is Banked Human Milk?

Banked human milk is breastmilk donated by women who are currently breastfeeding their own babies and have an abundant milk supply. They donate their extra breastmilk to milk banks for babies who may need it.

Donating breastmilk has been a common practice for more than 100 years in Europe, Norway, Denmark and Sweden. This practice is expanding around the world. There are currently 25 milk banks listed in the Human Milk Banking Association of North America (HMBANA).

## How is Banked Human Milk Used in the Hospital?

There are times when your baby may need to supplement. This supplement can be your own pumped breastmilk, banked human milk or formula. Supplementing with your own pumped breastmilk or banked human milk provides the most complete nutrition.

Some of the reasons your baby may need a banked human milk supplement are:

- low blood glucose that has not responded to breastfeeding or expressed breastmilk
- too much weight loss
- dehydration or jaundice and there is not enough of your own breastmilk for feedings
- you need to take a medicine that may be harmful if passed to your baby through breastmilk.

You may also ask for a banked human milk supplement when breastfeeding or pumping have not been enough to meet your baby's needs or you need a rest and you wish to only breastfeed.

## Is Banked Human Milk Safe?

The safety standards used for banked human milk were created by the HMBANA with help from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Banked human milk is screened and tested for safety. It is pasteurized (heated to a high temperature) to remove any bacteria or germs that may be in the breastmilk. The banked human milk is then frozen for use.

It is recommended by the FDA to only use breastmilk from screened donors and milk banks that are accredited by HMBANA. Accredited means that the individual or milk bank works by rules that make sure that safety and quality standards are followed.

It is not recommended to use breastmilk directly from individuals to get it through the internet. These donors may not have been screened for infectious diseases or have contamination risk.

As with any food, always wash your hands before and after handling containers of banked human milk.

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## How Do Women Become Breastmilk Donors?

Donors go through an extensive screening to determine if they meet the health requirements. This includes:

- a health history provided from the donor and her health care provider
- blood screening, which includes testing for HIV and other viruses
- written recommendations from the donor's health care provider and her baby's health care provider.

Donors are not allowed to smoke or take medicines. Each donor also receives instructions on how to safely collect, handle and store her breastmilk.

## Do Donors Get Paid?

Women who donate breastmilk do not get paid.

## How Much Does Human Banked Milk Cost?

There is no charge for banked human breastmilk given to your baby during your hospital stay.

After you leave the hospital, banked human milk can be purchased from several different sources. The cost will vary. Your nurse or lactation consultant can give you more information about how to buy banked human milk.

## Can You Give Your Baby Formula?

If giving your baby banked human milk is not your choice, formula is available. Talk with your baby's health care provider about what formula is best for your baby.

Allina Health supports feeding breastmilk whenever possible. Babies who are fed breastmilk are less likely to have allergies, asthma, diabetes, ear infections, pneumonia and diarrhea.

## More Information

Visit [hmbana.org](http://hmbana.org) for more information about banked human milk.