

# Pasteurised Donor Human Milk for Vulnerable Babies



NSW Health and the Australian Red Cross Lifeblood Service are working together to give vulnerable babies in NSW the best and safest alternative food if mother's own milk is unavailable.

Pasteurised donor human milk (PDHM) is a precious resource and is only used for the smallest or sickest babies who would benefit the most. This includes babies born very early, having problems with their gut or heart or for other serious problems.

Mother's own breast milk is the best possible nutrition for vulnerable babies. Some mothers can find it challenging to establish an adequate milk supply in the early weeks when their baby is in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). If this happens and your baby meets the criteria, they will be eligible to receive pasteurised donor human milk.

## Benefits of human milk versus formula

Human milk is the best nutritional support for your baby because:

- It is easier to digest than formula
- It coats and protects the gut and decreases the risk or severity of a severe bowel disease known as Necrotising Enterocolitis (NEC)
- It provides protection against some serious infections
- There are many things in human milk that are impossible to put into formula
- It provides for optimum growth and long term brain development of your baby.

Human milk is best for human babies.

## Frequently asked Questions

How long can my baby have pasteurised donor human milk?

Pasteurised donor human milk will be ordered by your baby's doctor while your baby is eligible to receive it. Once your own milk supply is meeting your baby's needs, donor milk will no longer be needed. However if your own milk is not available, your baby will move to formula at around 34 weeks if they are no longer high risk.

Will there always be enough pasteurised donor human milk for all babies who need it?

Sometimes more babies need donor human milk than is available. If this happens, the donor human milk will be given to the smallest and sickest babies. You will be told if this affects the supply for your baby.

Does pasteurisation change breast milk?

Your own milk is specially made for your baby. When we pasteurise donor human milk to make it safer there are some things that are lost. It still contains many of the factors that help protect your baby that are not present in formula.

Who donates breast milk?

Donor human milk is a generous gift from one mother to another. They may be feeding their own baby and have extra milk or have a supply of frozen milk that they have expressed for their own baby in the NICU who is being discharged. After the loss of a baby, mothers may continue expressing milk as a way of honouring their baby and to give other babies the best chance of a healthy life.

How safe is the donor milk?

Women are only eligible to donate milk after an interview and a blood test to make sure their milk is safe. Find out about the donation process at <https://www.lifeblood.com.au/milk>

Donor human milk is pasteurised to kill harmful bacteria and viruses. The risk of infection, however slight, cannot be reduced to zero. The Australian Red Cross Lifeblood Service Milk Bank complies with NSW Health and NSW Food Authority safety and infection guidelines. In decades of human milk banking worldwide, there have been no published reports of infectious diseases being caused by properly pasteurised human donor milk

Are mothers paid when they donate milk?

No. Mothers are not paid to donate milk.

Can I know who has given milk for my baby?

No. We maintain strict confidentiality of both the donor and recipient of the milk. This is our policy.