

# Pasteurised donor human milk

Pasteurised donor human milk is for babies in neonatal units, especially those:

- born very early, before 32 weeks
- born weighing less than 1500 grams
- who have serious problems, such as with their gut or heart.

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## Benefits of breastmilk and pasteurised donor human milk

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

- it is easier to digest than formula
- it coats and protects a baby's gut and reduces the risk of necrotising enterocolitis, a severe disease that affects a baby's intestines.
- it protects against some serious infections
- it helps babies grow and build their brain in the best way possible
- there are many things in human milk that are impossible to put into formula.

Human milk is best for human babies. After mother's own milk, pasteurised donor human milk is the next best option.

Some women can find it hard to make enough breastmilk in the early weeks if their baby is in a neonatal unit. This means that until your own milk comes in, your baby may be offered pasteurised donor human milk.

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## If your baby needs pasteurised donor human milk

Trained staff will speak with you if your baby needs pasteurised human donor milk.

If you consent, the milk will be ordered for your baby. Your baby will get the milk while they need it, depending on their age and how they progress.

You can change your mind about your baby receiving pasteurised donor human milk at any time.

Once your own milk supply is meeting your baby's needs, you will not need pasteurised human donor milk anymore. If your own breastmilk is not available, your baby will move to formula at around 34 weeks, if they are no longer high risk.

If there is a shortage of pasteurised donor human milk, it will be given to the smallest and sickest babies.

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## How breastmilk donations work

Women who donate breastmilk are screened for illnesses. They need to do a blood test and interview with Australian Red Cross Lifeblood. Their milk is then pasteurised to make it safer for babies.

Pasteurisation may remove some elements of the breastmilk. It still has the nutrients that help protect your baby.

Pasteurised human donor milk meets the NSW Health and NSW Food Authority guidelines. The risk of infection is small. No infectious illnesses have been reported from properly pasteurised donor milk in decades of human milk banking.

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## Confidentiality and reasons for donating

Donor human milk is a generous, anonymous gift from one mother to another. Lifeblood maintains strict confidentiality to both families donating and receiving the milk.

No payments are made for donating breastmilk.

Some reasons a mother may donate breastmilk:

- she is feeding her own baby and has extra milk
- she has frozen, expressed milk that she no longer needs
- she has lost her baby and wants to honour them by giving other babies the best chance of a healthy life.

Visit [\*\*Australian Red Cross Lifeblood\*\*](#) if you would like to know more about donating breastmilk.

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## Support

- Speak to your midwife or neonatal clinicians who are caring for your baby
- [\*\*Australian Breastfeeding Association\*\*](#) for 24-hour breastfeeding support on 1800 686 268
- [\*\*PANDA\*\*](#) for mental health support on 1300 726 306

The use of the term woman is not meant to exclude those who give birth and do not identify as female. It is crucial to use the preferred language as described and guided by each person when providing care.