

Milk sharing

As a mother, you have the right to decide how your baby will be fed.

If you are considering feeding your baby another mother's milk (milk sharing), please read this information.

If you have any questions, talk with your Lactation Consultant, Doctor, Midwife or Nurse.

This handout is for information purposes only.

Hamilton Health Sciences does not endorse giving another mother's milk which is unpasteurized and not from a registered milk bank.

Why give another mother's milk?

Some mothers are unable to provide all the breastmilk their baby needs. This may be a temporary problem or an issue for the entire time that you breastfeed. Giving breastmilk from another mother is an alternative to giving formula. Breastmilk is the normal and unequalled food for babies.

What do the experts say?

Health Canada and the Canadian Pediatric Society recommend that mothers who need more milk can give their babies pasteurized breastmilk from a registered donor milk bank. This milk is treated with heat to kill off bacteria and viruses. It is called pasteurized human donor milk. However, most people cannot access this milk unless their baby is very small or very premature. These tiny babies are usually being cared for in a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit.

A parent may consider choosing to give unpasteurized breastmilk from another mother or give cow's milk formula. Health Canada and the Canadian Pediatric Society do not recommend giving unpasteurized breastmilk from another mother. However, the World Health Organization and UNICEF feel that giving unpasteurized breastmilk from another mother may be safer than giving formula.

What information can help me make an informed choice?

- Unpasteurized breastmilk from another mother may contain bacteria, viruses, medications or other substances that could harm your baby. These chances are very low. To compare the risks of giving another mother's milk and giving formula, go to: <http://pubmedcentralcanada.ca/pmcc/articles/PMC3395287/>
- To learn about how to safely use another mother's unpasteurized breastmilk, go to: www.eatsonfeets.org/#fourPillars
- To learn more about the proven risks of formula that can last a lifetime, go to: www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2812877/

	Reasons to Choose	Reasons to Avoid
Formula Supplement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Familiar and accepted • Easily available • Easily given to baby • Provided by the hospital 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May damage the protective lining of the baby's gut which then increases the risk of infections and allergies • Increases the risk of ear infections, respiratory infections, gastrointestinal infections, meningitis, diabetes, obesity, allergies, and certain childhood cancers • The cow's milk protein is more difficult for baby to digest • Powdered formula may contain bacteria, which could make the baby sick
Unpasteurized breastmilk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human milk is made for human babies • Contains infection fighting cells not found in formula • Decreases baby's risk of ear infections, respiratory infections, gastrointestinal infections, meningitis, diabetes, obesity, allergies, and certain childhood cancers • Strengthens immune system by increasing growth of healthy gut bacteria 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential risk that milk may be contaminated with viruses such as HIV, Hepatitis B and C, CMV, and HTLV-1 • May contain traces of substances such as nicotine, prescription and non-prescription medications which can be transmitted through human milk • Potential risk of bacterial contamination through improper hygiene when pumping the milk • Possible dilution with other substances (eg. water, cow's milk, or other liquids) • Flash heating the milk to reduce the risk of virus and bacteria, takes additional time and effort