

Milk Banks Offer Life-Saving Return on Investment

Written by [Laurel Haring](#) Monday, January 19 2009 21:07

If you're a nursing mom who has an abundant supply of milk -- enough to share -- consider donating your extra milk to a milk bank. Likewise, if you are unable to breastfeed your baby, you and your health-care provider can discuss the option of feeding your baby milk from the milk bank.

Some moms are able to produce lots and lots of milk. Some moms are able to produce just the right amount of milk. And some moms aren't able to produce any milk or, for medical reasons, can't feed their own milk to their babies. Human milk banks can make the difference between life and death for some premature or fragile infants.

Milk Bank Beginnings

During ancient times and even up until the past few hundred years or so, wet nurses have been employed to breastfeed infants whose mothers were unable or didn't want to nurse their own babies. The first actual bank for mothers' milk opened in Vienna, Austria. Over the next 10 years, another bank opened in Boston (1911) and a third in Germany.

Interesting fact: Ask your parents or grandparents if they remember the famous Dionne Quintuplets born in 1934 in Canada. Well, they were fed with milk from a Chicago area milk bank.

When Mothers' Milk Is Used

According to The Human Milk Banking Association of North America's Web site, these are the most common reasons for donor milk prescriptions:

- Prematurity
- Allergies
- Feeding/formula intolerance
- Immunologic deficiencies
- Post-operative nutrition
- Infectious diseases
- Inborn errors of metabolism

Safety: First, Last and Always

Milk banks are very careful about the milk they accept. Donors are screened in much the same way that blood banks screen their donors, for both communicable diseases and health-related behaviors. (The cost of this screening may be covered by the bank; be sure

to ask.) Donors are also required to be nonsmokers and not to take medications or drink any alcohol during the exclusion period.

At the bank, the frozen milk from several donors is thawed, pooled, and pasteurized to kill bacteria and viruses while still retaining most of the milk's beneficial components. The milk is refrozen and, when a prescription for milk is received, a sample of the milk is cultured to make sure there is no bacteria. The milk is delivered frozen.

Milk Bank Statistics

Together, the U.S. and Canada have 11 milk banks that are members of HMBANA. In the five-year period ending in 2005 (the most recent year for which the organization's Web site has statistics), the banks experienced an amazing 45 percent increase in the number of ounces of milk dispensed. In 2005 alone, those 11 banks served hospitals in more than 80 cities in 29 states and three Canadian provinces.

For More Information about Milk Banks

[Human Milk Banking Association of North America](#) (HMBANA)

1500 Sunday Drive, Suite 102, Raleigh, NC 27607

Phone: 919-861-4530

E-mail: info@hmbana.org

United States

- California: [Mother's Milk Bank](#), San Jose (HMBANA member)
- Colorado: [Mother's Milk Bank at Presbyterian St. Luke's Medical Center](#), Denver (HMBANA member)
- Delaware: [Mother's Milk Bank](#), Newark
- Indiana: [Indiana Mothers' Milk Bank, Inc.](#), Indianapolis (HMBANA member)
- Iowa: [Mother's Milk Bank of Iowa](#), Iowa City (HMBANA member)
- Michigan: Bronson Mothers' Milk Bank (e-mail: Duffc@bronsonhg.org), Kalamazoo (HMBANA member)
- Massachusetts (New England): [Mothers' Milk Bank of New England](#), Newtonville, MA (HMBANA member)
- North Carolina: [WakeMed Mothers' Milk Bank and Lactation Center](#), Raleigh (HMBANA member)
- Ohio: , Columbus (HMBANA member)
- Texas:
[Mothers' Milk Bank at Austin](#), Austin (HMBANA member)
[Mothers' Milk Bank of North Texas](#), Ft. Worth (HMBANA member)

Canada

Christian & Women's Lactation Services (British Columbia Children's and Women's Hospital)(e-mail: fjones@cw.bc.ca), British Columbia (HMBANA member)

Mexico

Banco de Leche, Dr Rafael Lucio Av Adolfo Ruiz Cortines #2903, C P 91020, Xalapa Veracruz; phone: +52 55 14 45 51 or +52 55 14 45 00

This is my last post as editor of the Type-A Mom breastfeeding page -- one year after my very first post. It's been a wonderful experience writing for you, Type-A Mom, and for all the type-a moms out there. You guys are the best! And although I'm no longer an editor, I will always be a writer, so keep your eyes peeled for future articles.

Laurel Haring is a writer. She lives with her family in Wilmington, Delaware, and posts semi-regularly to her blog, [Let Me Say This About That](#).

<http://www.typeamom.net/milk-banks-offer-life-saving-return-on-investment.html>