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## Frequently Asked Questions

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### How do I become a milk donor?

Contact the [milk bank](#) closest to you to find out if you are eligible to donate. Even if there is not a milk bank in your city or state, many of the milk banks will still screen and accept you as a donor. The milk bank will cover the cost of the blood screening test and the cost of shipping the milk. The minimum donation amount might be higher for a "shipping donor," but the extra effort to ship your milk to a non-profit milk bank is well worth your time when you consider the infants that will benefit.

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### How do I order human donor milk?

Contact the [milk bank](#) closest to you to inquire about ordering donor milk. Most banks are able to ship milk via overnight delivery to your doorstep. A prescription is required for all outpatient orders.

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### What is a donor milk bank?

A donor milk bank is a service established for the purpose of collecting, screening, processing and distributing donated human milk to meet the specific medical needs of individuals for whom it is prescribed. All member banks operate under the guidelines of HMBANA.

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## **How does a donor milk bank operate?**

Donor milk banks receive milk from lactating mothers who have been carefully screened for health behaviors and communicable diseases, similarly to the way blood banks screen donors. Additionally, milk bank donors must:

- be non-smokers
- not regularly consume any medication (including mega-vitamins)
- not consume excluded medications or alcohol within the specified exclusion period

Milk is transported to the milk bank frozen. The milk from several donors is pooled after thawing, and then heat-treated to kill any bacteria or viruses. The milk is processed and then refrozen. It is only dispensed after a sample is cultured and shows no bacteria growth. Milk is shipped frozen by overnight express to hospitals and to individual recipients at home.

The milk is dispensed by physician prescription or by hospital purchase order only. There is a processing fee charged to cover the expense of collecting, pasteurizing and dispensing the milk.

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## **Where is the donor milk used?**

Donor milk is distributed to hospitals throughout the U.S. and Canada. The map below indicates cities that have hospitals served by HMBANA.

## **Why use donor milk?**

In the absence of the infant's own mother's milk, donor milk offers many of the benefits of human milk for the infant, including:

- optimal nutrition
- easy digestibility
- immunologic protection against many organisms and diseases

Human milk also contains growth factors that can:

- protect immature tissue
- promote maturation, particularly in the gastrointestinal tract
- promote healing of tissue damaged by infection.

Common reasons for prescribing donor milk include:

- Prematurity
- Allergies

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

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