

## Human Milk Banking, a Need of Hour

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### Editorial Note

Human milk is considered as nectar for a neonate. It has nutritive as well as other non nutritive benefits that helps in the complete development of the neonate., the nutrient composition of mature, term milk includes about 0.9 to 1.2 g/dL for protein, 3.2 to 3.6 g/dL for fat, and 6.7 to 7.8 g/dL for lactose. The practice of breast feeding has been encouraged as it is a wholesome source of nourishment. WHO has advised this practise for at least 6 months. A study on comparative analysis between formula feed versus human donor milk has shown that although the formula feeds were associated with faster growth, but still they had also shown the disadvantage of increased risk of “necrotising enterocolitis”.

The first Human Milk bank was established in 1909 in Vienna, Austria. In India also the practise of wet nursing has been practised since ancient times. the human milk banks are differently organised in every country in a different fashion, with more than 200 Human Milk Banks across Europe and Latin America.

The sterile nature of Human Breast Milk is an advantage over the top feeds and the other top feed preparations available .The human milk is considered to be a wholesome, sterile, easily digestible. It plays an essential role in development and strengthening mother-child bonding.The practise of breast feeding protects mother as well from risk of post partum haemorrhage, post partum depression, allergies, helps in faster weight loss, anaemia, urinary tract infections , etc. The anti-infectious and anti-inflammatory agents, growth factors, and prebiotics are useful and provide a passive immunity to the neonate in the form of IgA antibodies and lactoferrin . The future benefits to the new-born include protection from various respiratory and gastro-enteric ailments, neuro – development, increased intelligent quotient, lesser risk of allergies, less likelihood of obesity, certain cancers like leukaemias and lymphomas, protection from cavities etc.

### Human Milk Bank donor criteria

- she should voluntarily donate milk
- she should be free of infections like HIV, Hepatitis B or C or syphilis and other viral or bacterial diseases
- Her haemoglobin should be more than 10 gm %
- She should not be suffering from any major medical or surgical illness.

The standard operating procedures (SOP) of the bank which include use of hygienic practices like proper hand wash, donning gowns, mask, gloves, trimming nails, locking long hairs should be practised. Gloves should be changed frequently while handling raw and heat-treated milk. A regular health checkup and immunisation of staff against Hepatitis B is necessary

Every year, more than 20 million infants are born weighing less than 2.5kg. 3 WHO recommends that low birth weight infants who cannot be fed mother's own milk should be fed donor human milk. However this recommendation is not applicable to sick LWB and baby with weight less than 1 .0 Kg.

It has been known that the breast milk plays an important role in early weight gain and optimised and speedy recovery of sick new-borns. Hence this practise should be encouraged so as to reduce perinatal morbidity and mortality.

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