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**Breaking News**

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## Breast milk is best from mom or milk bank, not bought online

by **Trisha Koriath** • Staff Writer

Breast milk is the best food for babies. But sometimes, a mother has trouble breastfeeding. She may think about searching the Internet for moms who are selling their extra breast milk. However, feeding babies human milk bought online or from an unscreened seller is not a healthy choice. In fact, it can be harmful to infants, according to a study in *Pediatrics*, the journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP).

Researchers bought breast milk from sellers advertising on a human milk sharing website and compared it with milk sent to a human milk bank that followed storage and shipping rules. None of the samples purchased online had been pasteurized (heated then cooled) to kill germs.

They found that the milk bought online had more bacteria and viruses that can harm infants, including *Staphylococcus*, *Salmonella*, *Escherichia coli*, cytomegalovirus and human immunodeficiency virus. These germs are especially dangerous for premature babies and those with weak immune systems. The milk had been improperly stored or shipped, and some orders never arrived. The study also noted that breast milk sold by women who advertised that they ate

organic food or exercised was just as likely to have bacteria and viruses.

The AAP recommends feeding human milk to preterm infants, but milk from unscreened donors should not be used. Donated human milk that has not been pasteurized can spread diseases and pass chemicals and drugs to infants.

Before buying breast milk, parents should contact their pediatrician and the Human Milk Banking Association of North America (<https://www.hmbana.org/>) for help. Milk bank donors are screened and follow safety steps when shipping their milk to the bank. The milk then is pasteurized.

Any mother who feeds a baby expressed breast milk should follow pumping, storing and freezing guidelines. Information is available on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website, [www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/recommendations/handling\\_breastmilk.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/recommendations/handling_breastmilk.htm). For breastfeeding help, ask your pediatrician for resources and a referral to a lactation consultant.

Mothers who are unsure if they can breastfeed because they are taking medication, supplements or having a medical procedure can talk to their pediatrician and search for the drug or supplement in the LactMed Database, <http://toxnet.nlm.nih.gov/cgi-bin/sis/htmlgen?LACT>.