

OhioHealth Mothers' Milk Bank

Human milk is capable of providing life-altering protection and nourishment for infants, and premature births; however, many of the women who give birth to these children are not able to produce nearly enough of this critical nutrition to support their child. Fortunately, Wood County Hospital is one of seven locations in Ohio that is offering free lab draws for women to see if they are eligible to donate their breast milk to the OhioHealth Mothers' Milk Bank in Columbus.

The OhioHealth Mothers' Milk Bank provides donated pasteurized breast milk to mothers who are unable to provide their own, which in turn provides extreme health benefits to children. Premature-born, near-term and term babies are at a greater risk of developing Necrotizing Enterocolitis (NEC), which causes damage to the intestinal tract, when consuming formula-based milk versus human breast milk.

Human breast milk also prevents other infections like sepsis—a blood infection—and helps mature a child's intestines faster. Babies who consume human breast milk often spend fewer days in the hospital, need fewer IV's and experience long-term IQ advantages over formula-fed newborns.

New mothers whose breast milk is insufficient or unavailable are able to receive donor milk through the milk bank, which is received from screened donors across the state. Following a phone screening to verify health and lifestyle, lactating women are welcomed by WCH to take part in a free lab draw to donate their milk once they have received the necessary collection containers from the milk bank.

The donation is then frozen and mailed to the milk bank where it will then go through pasteurization, and sent to recipients. All shipping costs are paid for by the milk bank.

Jennifer Tansel, RN in the Obstetrics Department said premature infants' lives can be saved with the use of human milk.

"The milk bank uses the pasteurized milk for babies, children and even adults, and can prevent life-threatening issues, like NEC," Tansel said.

Some of the donated milk even goes to help aid in burn victims' injuries, as the milk can ease the pain of a burn and help with the healing process through its nutrients, although the majority is reserved for babies.

OhioHealth Mothers' Milk Bank accepts donor milk year round and accepts whatever amount donors are able to give. To donate to the OhioHealth Mothers' Milk Bank call the bank at (614) 566-0630, or e-mail milkbank@ohiohealth.com.