



## Facts for WIC Staff about the use of Donor Breastmilk

The criteria “Feeding donor human milk acquired directly from individuals or the Internet” has been added to two risks:

**Risk 411.5 Feeding Potentially Harmful Foods**

**Risk 411.9 Improper Handling of Expressed Breastmilk or Formula**

This criteria includes donor milk acquired from casual or informal breastmilk sharing between mothers, social media sites or internet purchases. It does not include milk from milk banks or sterilized donor milk available to hospitalized infants.

### **Known risks of giving breastmilk from other sources to infants:**

- A study of breastmilk shared through the internet found high amounts of bacteria and other contaminants due to poor collection, storage, and shipping practices.
- A study of potential donors who were thought to be low risk, found that about 3% of donors tested positive for diseases such as syphilis, HIV, hepatitis and other viruses. The study concluded that if these low risk donors tested positive, other untested or unscreened donors may present a significant health risk.
- The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recommend against feeding infants breastmilk obtained directly from individuals or through the internet due to the lack of adequate screening for infectious diseases and the risk of contamination.

### **Screening and documenting in TWIST:**

Screen infant feeding practices as a part of a full assessment. If an infant’s caregiver tells you he or she is feeding donor breastmilk, ask about the origin of the donor milk. For example: “It’s great that you want to provide breastmilk for your baby. Tell me more about where you’re getting the breastmilk...”

If the donor milk has been obtained from the internet or through informal milk sharing:

- Assign both risk factors 411.5 and 411.9
- Document the source of the donor milk in progress notes
- Encourage caregivers to tell their health care provider that they’re using donor milk if they have not already done so
- Use the talking points for WIC staff to share information about this risk during nutrition focused counseling

**Talking points for caregivers feeding donor milk from the internet or informal milk sharing:**

Ask permission to share the known risks of getting breastmilk over the internet or through informal milk sharing. For example, “Informal milk sharing has possible risks so WIC has some information that I’d like to share with you.” or “Can I share a few of the things we know about buying breastmilk over the internet or casual milk sharing with other mothers?”

- Breastmilk from a milk bank or hospital is the safest way to offer donor milk to your baby.
- Samples of breastmilk bought over the internet and through informal milk sharing showed high amounts of bacteria from improper storage and handling.
- Even women who think they’re healthy may have an infection or a virus they don’t know about.
- Viruses or bacteria in breastmilk from other mothers could make your baby sick especially if your baby is already ill or premature.
- Some samples of donor milk bought over the internet contained cow’s milk and other liquids. There’s no way to tell what you’re buying.

**If donor milk is being used as a supplement for a mother who is breastfeeding** consider asking if she’s interested in learning about ways to increase her milk supply. For example: “WIC has many resources for supporting breastfeeding. Let me know if you want to learn more about how we may be able to help you increase your milk production. We’re here to support you.”

**If participants ask to donate breastmilk:**

If participants ask about becoming a breastmilk donor, refer them to the Northwest Mother’s Milk Bank at: <http://www.nwmmb.org/> or (503) 469-0955.