

RISK OF INFECTION FROM BREAST MILK MISMANAGEMENT—PARENT INFORMATION

This document is not meant to be used “as is” and is only being distributed as an example of the kind of handout you may wish to adapt for use in your facility. Because of different patient-related factors, there is no “one size fits all” informational handout related to mismanagement of breast milk.

If your baby accidentally receives another mother’s breast milk, the risk of your baby getting an infection from the milk is very low.¹ The risk of infection is low because only a small amount of breast milk is involved and it is uncommon for an infection to be passed through the stomach. There have been no reported cases of infection involving babies who accidentally received another mother’s breast milk. If your baby was fed another mother’s milk, your healthcare provider will talk with you about the plan of care for you and your baby. The following information about the steps your healthcare provider takes to identify and prevent infection may help you feel better.

HIV Risk

Many parents are worried about the possibility of their baby getting HIV from another mother’s breast milk. There have been no reports of a baby getting HIV from drinking another mother’s breast milk.¹ However, babies can get HIV through breast milk after many feedings.^{1,2} Maternal and child health experts tell HIV-positive mothers to not breastfeed. Therefore, healthcare providers do not store breast milk from known HIV-positive mothers.^{1,2}

Hepatitis B Virus Risk

This is a more common infection than HIV. There have been no reported cases of a baby getting hepatitis B from drinking breast milk.¹ During pregnancy, mothers are routinely tested for hepatitis B. Mothers who have hepatitis B are encouraged to breastfeed. All babies are given hepatitis B vaccine at birth to protect them from this illness.¹

Other Infections

There have not been any cases reported of hepatitis C or cytomegalovirus infection from breastfeeding. The risk of getting these infections is low.¹

Notes

1. Warner B, Sapsford A. Misappropriated human milk: fantasy, fear, and fact regarding infectious risk. *Newborn Infant Nurs Rev* 2004 Mar;4(1):56-61.
2. Newell ML. HIV transmission through breastfeeding: a review of available evidence [online]. 2004 [cited 2006 Jul 27]. Available from Internet: http://www.who.int/nutrition/publications/HIV_IF_Transmission.pdf.
3. Cibulka NJ. Mother-to-child transmission of HIV in the United States. *Am J Nurs* 2006 Jul;106(7):56-63.