

The Health Wonders of Human Milk

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The National Coalition for Infant Health is a collaborative of more than 200 professional, clinical, community health, and family support organizations focused on improving the lives of premature infants through age two and their families. NCfIH's mission is to promote lifelong clinical, health, education, and supportive services needed by premature infants and their families. NCfIH prioritizes safety of this vulnerable population and access to approved therapies.

A new study confirms what mothers and doctors have long believed: human milk is the best source of nutrition for infants.

The wholesome sufficiency of “mother’s milk” is not just a turn of phrase; it is a biomedical reality. Access to human milk, whether

through mothers or donors, can majorly support neonatal health.

Human milk supports health and growth for preterm babies:

In particular, babies born preterm or with health challenges benefit from consuming human milk, whether from their own mother or a screened donor.

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[Recent research](#) on infants with congenital heart conditions affirms that a diet rich in human milk can have a life-changing impact on health and development. (1) These babies typically struggle to gain the healthy weight associated with normal growth. Human milk and human milk-derived fortifiers supply nutrients, prebiotics, and immunological components to support infants’ growth. It is



also better tolerated than milk products from other mammals.

Babies with congenital heart disease or defects also often undergo surgery before they are released from the hospital. When they receive a diet of exclusively human milk, those infants show improved growth and decreased risk of complications immediately after surgery.

Human milk also offers other benefits:

In addition to providing nutrition and immunological protection, human milk may confer other benefits. Human milk has been shown to protect against diabetes, obesity, asthma, cardiovascular diseases, and autoimmune disorders.

Some cultures even value other “milk therapies,” including topical applications to treat everything from pink eye to diaper rash. Scientists have made treatments directly from compounds in human milk, and many alternative and folk remedies show signs of having health benefits.

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National Coalition for Infant Health Values (SANE)

Safety. Premature infants are born vulnerable. Products, treatments and related public policies should prioritize these fragile infants’ safety.

Access. Budget-driven health care policies should not preclude premature infants’ access to preventative or necessary therapies.

Nutrition. Proper nutrition and full access to health care keep premature infants healthy after discharge from the NICU.

Equality. Prematurity and related vulnerabilities disproportionately impact minority and economically disadvantaged families. Restrictions on care and treatment should not worsen inherent disparities.