



# Milk Sharing

## EMBRACING TRADITION

Milk-sharing is an ancient practice that is getting new attention. When a mother died in childbirth, was separated from her baby or had issues with milk production- other women in her community would step in to provide the infant with milk. Often, this was in the form of direct breastfeeding.



An image of a Black slave wet-nursing.

Find out [more](#) about our Community Milk Sharing Depot.



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### WET-NURSING

When a baby is breastfed by someone other than their mother, it is called wet-nursing or cross-nursing. Sometimes, the wet-nurse was a friend or relative that had a baby around the same age. Other times, it was a woman that was hired by the family.

### WEALTH & PRIVILEGE WET-NURSING

Wet-nursing was most common for the wealthy or ruling class, and it grew to be a respected profession that A common way that wet-nursing can happen these days is if an adoptive mom or the non-birthing parent in a same-sex couple chooses to breastfeed their baby many poor women to earn good wages.

### GENERATIONAL TRAUMA

In America, the most well-known wet-nurses were enslaved Black women who were kept in the “big house” and forced to breastfeed their captors infants. This meant they were not able to nurse their own babies, which created a traumatic response to breastfeeding that still exists to this day.

### HUMAN MILK BANKS

In modern times, human milk banks are the best-known form of milk-sharing. Milk banks operate similarly to a blood bank. The milk is collected from multiple donors, tested, pooled, pasteurized and frozen. Milk banks operate all over the world, and their main customers are hospital NICU’s- but the milk is sometimes used on cancer and burn units as well.

### PEER-TO-PEER (P2P)

Peer-to-Peer (P2P), sometimes called informal milk-sharing, this is when moms in the same peer group share milk with each other at no cost. They could be neighbors, cousins, friends, or belong to the same mom group on social media. Although pumped milk is usually exchanged, sometimes they cross-nurse each other’s babies. Important guidelines to keep in mind for safer P2P milk-sharing: informed choice, donor screening, safe milk handling and home pasteurization. Following these four steps create a safer milk-sharing community for moms and babies.

