

# Peer milk-sharing participants generally keep it clean

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Mothers who want the benefits of breast milk for their babies but can't produce the substance often turn to milk-sharing networks.

A new study from the University of Central Florida found that although not a recommended practice, those who participate in [milk](#)-sharing networks generally follow good hygiene, which is critical for keeping milk free from [bacterial contamination](#).

"Peer milk sharing is a growing practice despite warnings from the FDA and the American Academy of Pediatrics," said Beatriz Reyes-Foster, lead author and an anthropology assistant professor. "Our findings suggest that parents who engage in these networks are taking precautions to make sure their children don't get sick and that's not something we knew before this study. But there is room for improvement."

Reyes-Foster, sociology associate professor Shannon K. Carter and assistant professor Melanie Sberna Hinojosa, published their findings in this month's edition of the *Journal of Human Lactation*.

The team of researchers surveyed 321 Central Florida peer milk-sharing parents who did not exchange money for milk. They asked:

- Do you freeze milk for more than six months?
- Do you leave the milk at room temperature for more than 8 hours?
- Do you use ice to transport?

- Do you sanitize pump equipment?
- Do you wash your hands before handling the milk?

The team found that 35.4 percent of recipients reported using all five safe practices and another 40.6 percent reported using at least four of the five. No recipient reported using only one or none of the [safe practices](#). Results for donors were similar with nearly 80 percent confirming they sanitize pumps use to extract the milk.

The team also found that the behavior didn't change even when sociodemographic characteristics did.

The research was conducted in 2014, before a Human Milk Banking Association of North America bank was established in Florida. This organization provides donors with milk-handling guidelines. The researchers suggest that the numbers may change now that the organization is in the state.

The researchers also warn that more study is needed and that the findings don't extend to online classifieds where milk is exchanged for money. The prevalence of safety practices in those kinds of exchanges is unknown and deserves study, Reyes-Foster said.

Provided by University of Central Florida

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