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*[Breast is best--human milk for premature infants].*

*[Article in Hebrew]*

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Abstract

*Nutrition for preterm babies is aimed at achieving expected intrauterine growth and accretion of nutrients. Early trophic feedings should be started as soon as possible for gastrointestinal priming. Mother's (breast) milk is the best food for preterm babies. Its advantages are in host defence, nutritional components and suitability for gut absorption, as well as its psychological and developmental value. The limitations of human milk for preterm babies, mainly in protein and minerals, can be compensated for by using powdered human milk fortifier. Sucking skills usually mature around 34 weeks, corrected gestational age. Thus, small preemies are initially fed by orogastric tubes, meaning that expressed breast milk is used. Support of lactation in mothers of preemies mandates protection of the mother and child bonding process and early skin to skin contact ("kangaroo care"). Methods for storage of expressed breast milk and the recommended length of storage are discussed. Milk bank mandates pasteurization and freezing of the donors' milk. Most of the nutritional and immunological advantages of human milk are preserved after such treatments. Cytomegalovirus (CMV) infections in preterm infants, that were acquired from mother's expressed breast milk, are not uncommon, and require further attention.*