

04:05 PM 08 JUL MARKET STATS ▼	SENSEX 27,127 ▼ -74.59	NIFTY 50 8,323 ▼ -14.70	GOLD (MCX) (Rs/10g.) 31,747 ▼ -134.0	USD/INR 67.36 ▼ -0.04	CREATE PORTFOLIO	Download ET MARKETS APP	CHOOSE LANGUAGE ENG
--	----------------------------------	-----------------------------------	--	---------------------------------	-------------------------	--------------------------------	------------------------

India needs breast milk donors to save lives of lakhs of preterm babies

By [Rajiv Singh](#), ET Bureau | Jul 09, 2016, 05.34 AM IST

[Post a Comment](#)

Twenty-four-year old Divyani Malhotra should have been over the moon with the birth of her baby girl; instead she was a more than usual harried new mother.

Her baby girl was a preemie. Doctors were repeatedly telling her that breastfeeding would improve the odds for her baby but Divyani had a problem: she was unable to feed her baby. Doctors were not wrong.

Studies show that babies fed breast milk have a 14 times higher rate of survival in the first six months than those who are not. Breast milk, doctors say, is full of nutrients necessary and goes a long way in preventing infant deaths.

WHO IS A PRETERM BABY?

Any baby born alive **before 37 weeks** of pregnancy is a preterm baby

HOW MANY SUCH BABIES ARE BORN EVERY YEAR?

Globally, an estimated **15 million** babies

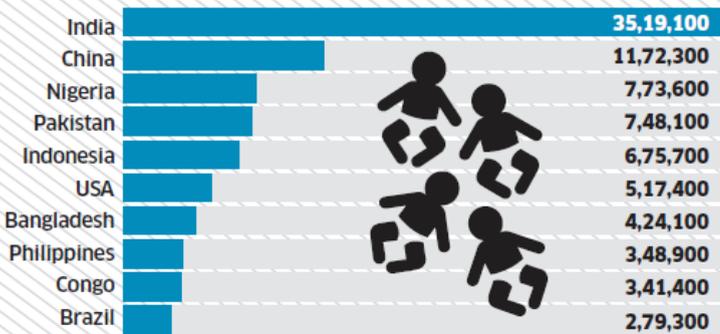
AND HOW MANY OF THEM DIE DUE TO PRETERM COMPLICATIONS?

Almost 1 million die each year. It's the leading cause of death among children under **5 years of age.** Many survivors face a lifetime of disability, including learning disabilities and visual and hearing problems

WHAT'S THEIR DEATH RATE IN INDIA?

An estimated **3 lakh preterm babies die every year**, according to a statement made by health minister last year in the Parliament

TOP 10 COUNTRIES WITH THE GREATEST NUMBER OF PRETERM BIRTHS...



Increasing preterm birth rates mean an increased need for donor milk. Preterm infants are most in need of human milk, yet their moms are the least likely to be able to provide what they need in the earliest days of life.

CAN BREAST MILK SAVE THEIR LIVES?

Yes, to a large extent. Without breast milk during their first two weeks of life, premature infants are left wanting for antibodies and are vulnerable to infections and diseases that result in death. In India almost 50% of preterm babies die under 28 days.

HOW DOES BREAST MILK HELP?

Packed with nutrients, breast milk helps build the immune system and is the ideal food for a baby. Plus, human milk is always sensitive and compatible to feeding the 'just from surgery' stomach of the infant.

WHO CAN DONATE BREAST MILK?

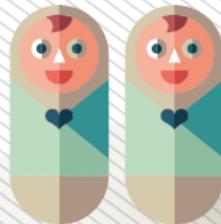
Any lactating woman, who is in good physical and mental health and not on any medications or drugs and has an excess amount of milk after satisfactorily feeding her baby, is eligible to donate her milk

HOW IS BREAST MILK COLLECTED IN INDIA?

Breast milk is pumped by the mother using a breast pump in her house. The milk is then stored in sterile containers provided by the milk bank, which then picks up the milk.

WHAT HAPPENS TO DONATED MILK?

Once it reaches the bank, it is pasteurised, and is further tested to make sure it is free of any infection. This milk is then dispatched for the preterm infants as and when the need arises



Source: WHO, SABR, Amaara



TRIVIA..

BRAZIL has the largest network of breast milk donors in the world

1.66 LAKH women donated milk in 2014

217 milk banks

126 MILK collection points

MAY 19TH IS celebrated as National Day of Human Milk Donation

Milk bank system is often cited as a key factor in Brazil's 73% decline in infant mortality over the past two decades, from 63.2 per 1,000 births in 1985 to 19.6 in 2013

DID YOU KNOW?

1,569.79 litres

THAT'S THE GUINNESS BOOK RECORD for most milk donated by an American, Alyse Ogletree, from January 11, 2011 to March 25 2014

ASIA'S FIRST MILK BANK was established at Lokmanya Tilak Hospital in Mumbai in November 1989

WORLD'S FIRST MILK BANK was opened in Vienna in 1911



In the past, women like

Divyani would rely on wet nurses but that is no longer a possibility. But the fact she lived in Delhi proved to be a boon for her baby. She was able to access a breast milk bank and her preemie daughter the nutrients crucial to saving her life.

A breast milk bank is a service much like the blood bank. It collects, screens, processes and provides human milk donated by nursing mothers to premature and newborn infants whose mothers are unable to feed them.

Had it not been for the milk bank, Divyani's baby could well have been among the 3 lakh preterm babies that the government estimates die every year.

Dr Ankit Srivastava, founder of Breast Milk Foundation, says that the milk bank is a proven solution against life-threatening illnesses, serious infections and other complications related to preterm birth.

It is not just preterm babies who benefit from this intervention. Infant mortality in the newborn period (the first month) can be drastically reduced through an intervention that would ensure that mothers who are unable to feed their babies can access breast milk for them.

This is not a theoretical proposition. Brazil has shown that it can be done. Beginning 1985, a chemist Joao Arigio Guerrade Almeida began

working to transform what was till then commercial enterprises where women sold their breast milk into a network that would ensure that mothers who were unable to feed their babies had access to breast milk—knitting together a 217-unit strong Brazilian Milk Bank Network.

The results have been spectacular. The infant mortality rate reduced by 73 per cent from 63.2 per 1,000 births in 1985 to 19.6 in 2013.

India, despite the gains in reducing infant mortality, continues to have a high death rate in the first month: 43 per 1,000 live births. According to a Lancet report, of the 14 lakh under-five children who died in 2012, more than half of the deaths were of babies who were under 28 days' old.

Given the proven benefits of breast milk for infants, Dr Raghuram Mallaiah, director of Neonatology at Fortis La Femme, Delhi's sole breast milk bank which was opened in collaboration with Breast Milk Foundation, says that for many mothers, who are unable to breastfeed their vulnerable, hospitalised babies, pasteurised donor milk is an "essential alternative."

Yet, despite the need, and the efficacy of the intervention, India has only 14 such banks. "More such banks are badly needed," says Divyani. Typically it costs Rs 1.25 crore to set up a milk bank.

These banks are usually attached to neo-natal units in hospital. Milk banks can also exist as standalone units, however that would require a strong network and relationship with hospitals that would require its services.

India also has guidelines in place that govern the functioning and the processes used to ensure quality of the collected milk. Social stigma is one reason for not donating breast milk. Many women still feel that it's a taboo.

For a country which has taken decades to get used to the concept of donating blood, it's not going to be an easy task convincing them about the merits of donating breast milk. It is for this reason that Srivastava is uneasy about comparisons with Brazil, where donating breast milk is common place as donating blood. "The concept of human milk bank is not easily accepted and welcomed by a large number of people in India," he said.

Countries like Brazil have made serious efforts to enhance the knowledge about such banks and make them popular among people.

What Brazil required was an affordable network and linking banks with neo-natal units while in India what is required is creating a mindset that takes the stigma out of donating breast milk.

Civil society organisations and experts in the field suggest outreach campaigns aimed at new mothers to highlight donating excess milk can help save lives of infants, who for a variety of reasons are not being breastfed.

Another impediment has been the idea that 'formula milk' is an effective alternative to breast milk, says Srivastava. But Srivastava is optimistic: "Things will change as awareness about such banks spreads. And hopefully, it will not take the country another 25 years to realise the need for setting set up many more such banks on a warfooting."

Stay on top of business news with The Economic Times App. [Download it Now!](#)   

[Live Market](#)
[News](#)
[Portfolio](#)
[Mobile](#)
[Live TV](#)
[Newsletter](#)
[Commodities](#)
[Speed](#)
[QnA](#)
[Blogs](#)
[Alerts](#)
[RSS](#)

Other Times Group news sites

Times of India | इकनॉमिक टाइम्स
 छंदीनीमिड टाइम्स | Mumbai Mirror
 Times Now | Indiatimes
 नवभारत टाइम्स | महाराष्ट्र टाइम्स
 ವಿಜಯ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ | Lifehacker
 Gizmodo | Eisamay | IGN India
 NavGujarat Samay

Living and entertainment

Timescity | iDiva | Bollywood
 Zoom | Luxpresso
 Online Songs | Travel
 Guides | Hotel
 Reviews | Cricbuzz.com | Prepaid
 Mobile Recharge

Networking

itimes | MensXP.com

Hot on the Web

News – TOI | Daily Horoscope
 Weather in Delhi | Mumbai Map
 Horoscope 2016 | Hotels in Delhi
 Xiaomi Mobile Phones

Services

Book print ads | Online shopping | Free Business Listings
 Matrimonial | Astrology | Jobs | Property | Buy car | Bikes in India
 Used Cars | Online Deals | Restaurants in Delhi | Movie Show Timings in
 Mumbai
 Remit to India | Buy Mobiles | Listen Songs | Voice Greetings | Technology
 News | Augmented Reality | Mobile Recharge | Compare Mobile Phones