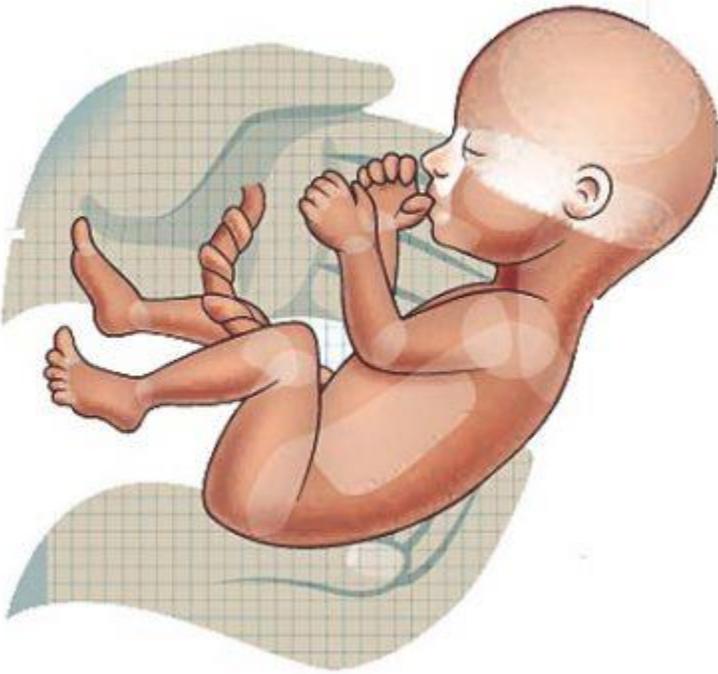


# Milking the best for pre-term babies

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By Author [M. Sai Gopal](#) | Published: 21st Sep 2018 12:11 am Updated: 21st Sep 2018 12:13 am



**Hyderabad:** Mother's milk is always considered as a gold standard for nourishment and growth of infants. But, what about pre-term babies who are severely underweight and need more than just breast milk for survival and growth? What happens when mothers are unable to produce enough breast milk for the infant?

Typically, under such circumstances, paediatricians either fall back on formula milk, look for a wet nurse or depend on milk banks that supply pasteurised human donor milk. But, now, with the development of newer ways to enhance quality of breast milk, paediatricians have the option to feed underweight pre-term babies with better forms of human breast milk.

“We are offering mother's milk that provides 70 calories of energy for 100 ml. Usually, mother's breast milk offers 55 calories to 59 calories for every 100 ml. But, we developed a technique to enhance the calories of mother's breast milk. This does not involve adding any kind of manmade additives,” says Sourabh Aggarwal, MD of Neolacta Lifesciences.

While milk banks provide only pasteurised breast milk, Aggarwal says he figured out a way to make human breast milk richer in energy and contain more proteins that boost the immunity at his Neolacta Lifesciences facility in Bengaluru. “We developed a patented technology to increase protein content in mother's milk. For instance, if 100 ml of mother's milk contains 1 g of protein, our product has 3.5 g for the same amount. This is good for the underweight pre-term baby,” he says.

According to him, the cream from the breast milk, which is collected from milk banks, is extracted and added to a larger portion of human milk to enhance the overall energy content. To improve the protein content, paediatricians, while dealing with pre-term babies, add a bovine-based fortifier to pasteurise mother's milk.

“Instead of a bovine-based fortifier, we developed a patented human-based fortifier that adds naturally more proteins to the breast milk. These products were never introduced in India and it will definitely take some time to catch up,” he says.

Ensuring enough supply of human breast milk is always a challenge, given the fact that there are only 54 milk banks in India. In fact, there are only two milk banks in Hyderabad — one at Niloufer and other at Fernandez hospitals.

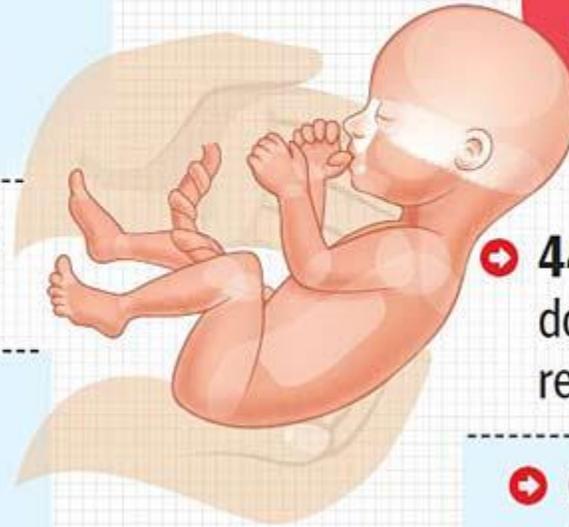
“The concept is new in India and it would take time to catch up. There is a need to have products based on human milk because we have more pre-term babies. We work closely with NGOs, who have community outreach programmes and help us a lot with reaching out to human breast milk donors,” Aggarwal says.

# Cause for concern

➔ Of them, **4 lakh** are very low birth weight babies (VLBW)

➔ VLBW are infants who weigh below **1,500 g**

➔ Extremely Lower Birth Weight babies less than **1,000 g**



**35 lakh**  
pre-term babies  
born in India  
every year

➔ **44 lakh** litres of donor mother's milk required ever year

➔ Only **54 milk** banks in India