

## Funny Milk

Have you encountered mothers who produced milk that looked or smelled unusual? Often mothers are concerned and ask questions about this. Breastmilk can emit odors from foods the mother has eaten, most notably garlic. In fact, research conducted by Mennella and Beauchamp (1991) showed that babies preferred the garlic laced breastmilk and consumed more than "unflavored" milk.

Milk from mothers who exercise prior to breastfeeding can contain "off" flavors due to the lactic acid that builds in the body during vigorous exercises which is passed into the breastmilk. Although it does not cause the baby any problem, the baby may not be eager to nurse right after exercise.

Alcohol also can flavor the milk. Studies have shown that babies consumed less milk containing alcohol than not. Alcohol consumption should be avoided or limited due to the alcohol that is passed to the baby.

Breastmilk will have the faint smell and flavor of spices and foods eaten by the mother. It has been speculated that these flavors passed on to the baby in breastmilk, acquaints him to the flavors of the family foods.

Milk can be colored by the mother's diet as well. Spinach and a high intake of green leafy vegetables can make breastmilk greenish, beets can give breastmilk a pink cast, and carrots and squash can make it yellowish.

"Rusty pipe syndrome" is a brownish color in breastmilk that occurs most often at the onset of lactation and dissipates over time. The coloration is due to minute amounts of blood from broken capillaries in the breast tissue.

Milk can have "clumps" floating in it or a layering at the top. This accumulated fat and can be dispersed back into suspension by gentle agitation of the milk.

Occasionally women report milk that smells "spoiled" after only a short period of storage. The cause of this is unknown (though may be related to an unusually fast break down of milk fats) when the milk is stored in recommended containers and for limited periods of time. Suggestions may include use of glass storage containers, freezing at the coldest temperature possible and keeping the milk away from odor releasing foods in the refrigerator or freezer. Women have found that heat treating their milk (heating until steaming, then chilling) stops the formation of "off" odors.

### References:

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