

## Far from sterile: Breast milk ‘teeming’ with bacteria

Until relatively recently, most researchers thought that breast milk was [sterile](#). But it turns out that, like most other body parts and fluids, it’s teeming with bacteria. The composition of its microbiome varies based on a number of factors—including whether the milk was pumped, or fed to an infant directly from the breast, according to [a study](#) published [February 13] in the journal Cell.

...

The research team examined the breast milk microbiome from just under 400 mother-infant pairs participating in the Canadian Healthy Infant Longitudinal Development (CHILD) study, which is tracking participants from pregnancy through childhood and adolescence.

...

The results showed that the milk was highly variable, and different women had different types and amounts of bacteria in their milk. The team could only account for about 30 percent of the differences.

...

Pumped milk had higher levels of potential pathogens, which, [researcher Meghan] Azad stressed, are not necessarily actively harmful. “It’s not always black and white. They might have health implications, but we’d need more research to know for sure,” she said. Pumping also was linked to lower levels of Bifidobacteria, which are generally considered beneficial to the infant gut microbiome, in the breast milk.

**Read full, original post:** [Pumping Breast Milk Changes Its Microbiome](#)