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Lee Memorial seeking breast milk donors for ill newborns

By FRANK GLUCK

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Toby Sealey's delivery of her bushy-headed bundle of joy May 10 — Mother's Day — was not an easy one.

The boy, Braden, came six weeks premature and required intensive medical treatment at a Cape Coral Hospital special-care unit. He was born so early she was not even physically able to breast-feed.

Sealey made do with less-nutritious formula, a problem Lee Memorial Health System hopes to make much less common for Southwest Florida mothers with the opening this week of the region's first breast milk donation centers.

The sites, located at Cape Coral Hospital and HealthPark Medical Center (home to The Golisano Children's Hospital of Southwest Florida), are accepting donations.

"If a baby can get it from a donor, a healthy mother, I definitely think that's a good thing," said Sealey, whose baby remained hospitalized Tuesday. She said she is now able to breast-feed. "If my baby couldn't get it, I would want it for him."

Studies show that breast milk has unique properties that help protect babies from illness. It may also prevent them from getting certain kinds of infections, such as life-threatening necrotizing enterocolitis, and chronic diseases such as asthma and Type 2 diabetes.

Women who deliver prematurely may not be able to immediately produce breast milk. Others with certain medical conditions or who regularly take medications may also not be able to nurse their newborns.

Lee Memorial's two milk "depots" are among only a handful of such sites in Florida and the only one between Miami and Bradenton. Other statewide depots are located in Miami, Bradenton and Orlando, according to the Human Milk Banking Association of North America.

A designated "milk bank" is under development in Orlando, the first in Florida and one of only 16 nationally. Donor milk has until now been shipped from a bank in Texas.

"This is a big deal for Florida to have its own milk bank," said Nancy Travis, the director of women's and children's services at Cape Coral Hospital. "It's very, very important that breast milk be found. It's very healing to those babies and helps prevent many diseases."

Hospital officials said Tuesday they are unsure how much donated milk is consumed at Lee Memorial hospitals. But it is used every day, particularly in the neonatal intensive care unit.

Pre-screened donors drop milk at the sites, which then ship them to the Orlando bank for preparation. The milk is distributed to Florida hospitals as needed.

Lee Memorial and other depot hospitals get priority in times of statewide shortage or natural disaster, Travis said. One ounce can feed a premature newborn for a day.

Donors must be in generally good health, must be non-smokers and cannot be taking medications on a regular basis.

Donor milk, like donated blood and tissue, is considered safe. The milk undergoes bacteriological testing and then is pasteurized to kill any bacteria or viruses.

Milk is distributed by prescription only. The highest priority will be given to premature and hospitalized infants.

New laser treatment for post-menopausal women

Provided by SUSAN BENNETT

PHYSICIANS' PRIMARY CARE
OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA

A new laser treatment that promises to restore vaginal health among post-menopausal women and breast cancer survivors has been introduced in Southwest Florida by Physicians' Primary Care of Southwest Florida, the first medical practice in the region to receive the new technology.

The MonaLisa Touch is approved by the U.S. Food & Drug Administration and is the first laser being used for the treatment of vaginal atrophy, a condition affecting primarily menopausal women, breast cancer survivors and women who have undergone hysterectomies. Women who suffer from vaginal atrophy complain of symptoms such as dryness, irritation, lack of moisture, painful urination, painful intercourse and loss of muscle tone.

"With this new treatment, we'll be able to reverse the effects of vaginal atrophy in three easy treatments using a fractional carbon dioxide laser," said Dr. Rex Stubbs, obstetrician-gynecologist with Physicians' Primary Care of Southwest Florida. "No anesthesia is needed, and there is no downtime for the patient."

The minimally invasive, painless treatment is performed in the Fort Myers Ob/Gyn office of Physicians' Primary Care of Southwest Florida, 9021 Park Royal Drive.

Patients undergo a 45-second laser treatment, sending the laser's energy to the vaginal wall to promote production of new collagen, mucosal revitalization and a return to pre-menopausal vaginal health. Three treatments are required,

spaced six weeks apart. The treatments are not covered by insurance.

"All patients in the clinical trials experienced overwhelmingly positive and almost immediate results," said Dr. Kevin Fleishman, obstetrician-gynecologist with the doctor's office. "The women studied showed a high, statistically significant improvement in symptoms, including dryness, pain, itching, painful urination and painful intercourse, after the first treatment. They experienced no side effects or adverse reactions and showed more progress with each subsequent treatment."

Issues of vaginal health are commonly seen in post-menopausal women, breast cancer survivors and women who have had a hysterectomy, both physicians said. The MonaLisa Touch treatment is particularly well-suited for patients who cannot, or elect not to, receive estrogen therapy.

The MonaLisa Touch treatment is designed to stimulate and promote the regeneration of collagen fibers and the restoration of hydration and elasticity within the vaginal mucosa. The laser is able to release energy through a special pulse, and the laser energy heat penetrates to a depth that stimulates the synthesis of new collagen, which results in the thickening of the vaginal skin, increasing moisture and better lubrication, restoring the vagina to a state similar to before menopause.

For more information or to make an appointment, call 239-477-5650 or visit www.ppcswfl.com/monalisatouch. There are nine offices in the practice, including Fort Myers, Cape Coral and Lehigh Acres.