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Washington:

Scientists claim to have discovered that human breastmilk contains stem cells which are able to turn into not only breast cells, but also cells of the bone, cartilage, fat, brain, liver and pancreas.

A team, led by Dr Foteini Hassiotou at the University of Western Australia, says this shows that human breastmilk has the potential to help people suffering from diseases like Parkinson's and diabetes.



Benefit of obtaining stem cells from breastmilk is that they can be accessed non-invasively: expert. (Reuters)

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Breastmilk 'can provide stem cells'

Scientists claim to have discovered that human breastmilk contains stem cells which are able to turn into not only breast cells, but also cells of the bone, cartilage, fat, brain, liver and pancreas.

A team, led by Dr Foteini Hassiotou at the University of Western Australia, says this shows that human breastmilk has the potential to help people suffering from diseases like Parkinson's and diabetes.

"The benefit of obtaining stem cells from breastmilk is that they can be accessed non-invasively, unlike getting them from the bone marrow, umbilical cord blood or peripheral blood," Dr Hassiotou said.

She added: "If we can understand the properties of these cells and their role in the breast and in the breast-fed baby, we can use them as models for breast cancer research and in innovative stem cell therapies.

"Stem cell therapy is a very promising technology. The limitations of the current therapies are that the transplanted stem cells are accessed using invasive methods. Breastmilk offers a new exciting opportunity for stem cell therapies, with the potential to benefit not only the mother and child, but also other people."

The scientists said that they are currently examining the in vivo transplantation potential of milk stem cells into animals.