



# Medication and Lactation

<http://www.pedsalex.com/breastfeeding.php>

Most medication/drugs are safe to take while breastfeeding a baby, and the notion of stopping breastfeeding or “pumping and dumping” is usually not necessary. Infants have a lower drug clearance than adults, therefore it is prudent to be aware of medication safety. In short, while the majority of medications are considered “safe” during breastfeeding, it is important to know what you are taking and the potential side effects to your baby. The following outlines a review of drug classes and their effects on a breastfed baby.

## Alcohol

If consumed in moderation, mothers will not harm their infant. Alcohol is not stored in breast milk, but enters and exits according to the mother’s blood alcohol level. Alcohol levels in milk peak approximately 30-60 minutes after ingestion, swiftly falling after cessation of alcohol intake.

- **No need to “pump and dump”:** Alcohol levels in breast milk are generally 15% of what mother consumes. Alcohol is normally rapidly metabolized, therefore mothers just need to wait a few hours for their bodies to metabolize and eliminate the alcohol they have consumed.
- **Alcohol may impede letdown:** Studies have shown that alcohol inhibits the release of a hormone called oxytocin. Oxytocin is responsible for the efficient release of breast milk. It is known that alcohol partially to completely blocks the release of oxytocin, thus poses a potential risk to milk supply.
- Alcohol is considered “**usually compatible**” with breastfeeding by the AAP
- **Have you had too much?** The following link allows you to input your weight and number of alcoholic beverages consumed. The calculator then allots a time for safe consumption of breast milk. **[Click here for Alcohol Dosage Calculator](#)**

## Non-prescription drugs

- **Nicotine**
  - **Recommendation: not recommended/contraindicated**
  - *Effects on baby:* fussiness at breast, feeding refusal, vomiting, diarrhea, restlessness, and increased heart rate
- **Caffeine**
  - **Recommendation: acceptable in moderation**
  - Less than 1% of the maternal dose is transferred to baby.
  - 3 or more cups per day of coffee are associated with reduction in iron content in breast milk. Over time, this could lead to anemia in an exclusively breastfed baby.
  - *Effects on baby:* jitteriness, irritability, altered sleeping pattern
- **Marijuana, Heroin**
  - **Recommendation: not recommended/contraindicated**
  - *Effects on baby:* sedation, weakness, poor feeding pattern, respiratory depression, irritability, vomiting

## Prescription drugs

**[Click here to search a database for specific medication safety](#)**