



Medications in Breastfeeding

Many mothers have been inaccurately informed that they must stop breastfeeding when they are taking medications. If you are currently breastfeeding and have been told to stop because of the use of certain medications, you should confirm this with your doctor, and ensure that the information has been verified with reliable sources.

Most medications appear in tiny amounts in breast milk. Only very few medications may cause problems for infants in minuscule doses. If you have any concerns, you should seek a doctor's advice on whether an alternative medication that is breastfeeding safe can be prescribed instead.

If you have been advised by your doctor to stop breastfeeding while you are on medications, you can maintain your milk supply by expressing regularly. You might need to discard the expressed milk during this period of time. Check with your doctor when you can re-establish breastfeeding.

Why are there traces of medication in breastmilk after consuming it?

The concentration of medication in mother's milk is much less compared to what the mother is taking.

The following are some examples of commonly used medications considered safe during breastfeeding:

Painkillers/Fever-reducing medications

- Paracetamol
- Ibuprofen

Anti-histamines*

- Cetirizine
- Loratadine
- Fexofenadine

Gastrointestinal medications

- Omeprazole
- Famotidine
- Lactulose

Antibiotics

- Amoxicillin
- Augmentin
- Cephalexin
- Cefuroxime
- Tetracycline
- Doxycycline

Anti-fungals

- Fluconazole
- Nystatin

Anti-virals

- Acyclovir

*Note: Take care with over-the-counter flu medications that contain pseudoephedrine because it can decrease milk supply.

Medications applied to the skin or inhaled (e.g. drugs for asthma) or applied to the eyes or nose, are almost always safe for breastfeeding.

Drugs for local or regional anaesthesia are not absorbed from the baby's stomach and are safe. Drugs for general anaesthesia will get into the milk in only tiny amounts and are extremely unlikely to cause any effects on your baby. They are usually eliminated rapidly from your body. You can breastfeed as soon as you are awake and up to it.

If in doubt whether any medications are safe for breastfeeding, please check with your doctor/pharmacist.

Source: American Academy of Pediatrics, KKH Antimicrobial Guidelines, International Breastfeeding Centre

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