



Alcohol, Caffeine and Smoking while Breastfeeding

The benefits of breastfeeding outweigh the risks of alcohol, caffeine and smoking. The risk of these substances are greater in premature babies or those with health problems. Using more than 1 substance may add up and create more problems for baby.

Alcohol

- An occasional drink is OK after the first couple weeks, but a drunk mother cannot care for her baby.
- Wait 2 to 2½ hours per drink (12oz regular beer, 5oz wine, 1½oz liquor) before nursing again.
- You don't need to pump and dump, because alcohol passes into and then out of breastmilk at the same rate as it does in the blood stream. When the breastmilk is cleared of alcohol, baby can nurse.
- Nursing or pumping within 1 hour before a drink may reduce the alcohol amount in breastmilk afterwards.
- If you don't wait after drinking as recommended, side effects can occur.
 - Baby may be fussy and sleep poorly.
 - More than 1 drink daily may affect infant growth, development and motor function.
 - Heavy drinking may cause excessive sedation, fluid retention, and hormone imbalances in infants.
- Alcohol does NOT increase milk production. It may increase prolactin levels, but decreases oxytocin, the hormone which controls milk let-down, so less milk flows to baby during nursing. This is Mother Nature's way of protecting baby from alcohol.
- Antabus, a drug to reduce alcohol cravings in alcoholics, is NOT compatible with nursing.

Caffeine

- Caffeine gets into breastmilk about 60 minutes after mom ingests it.
- Only about 1% of mom's caffeine dose gets to baby through breastmilk.
- An adult metabolizes caffeine in 2 ½ hours, but newborns and premature infants take about 80 hours (3-4 days). So if mom ingests regular caffeine, it can accumulate in a small baby's system over time.
- Symptoms include fussiness, jitteriness and poor sleep.
- Over time, babies metabolize caffeine faster, to reach the same rate as adults.
- A study showed that 5 cups of coffee per day (500-1000mg caffeine) resulted in no side effects in infants over 3 weeks old.
- Generally, 300mg of caffeine per day is likely safe for breastfeeding mothers to ingest.

Caffeine source	Caffeine dose
8oz brewed coffee	100-200mg
8oz tea	10-50mg
12oz soda	25-50mg
1 cup chocolate chips	100mg
- Be aware that babies with apnea of prematurity are given caffeine as a drug to prompt them to breath.
- Iron in breastmilk may decrease if mom drinks more than 16oz per day of coffee. Thus, baby may develop mild iron deficiency anemia. This is NOT related to caffeine, but is due to other components of coffee.

Smoking

- Avoid subjecting your baby to the harmful effects of secondhand smoke.
- Smoking may decrease milk supply.
- Try to stop smoking or at least limit the number of cigarettes smoked each day.
- Smoke immediately after nursing so the dose of nicotine in the breastmilk has time to leave the breasts in time for the next feeding.
- Side effects of nicotine for baby may include bad tasting breastmilk, decreased appetite, fussiness and restlessness.
- A nicotine patch while breastfeeding may be less risky than smoking. Try to gradually decrease the patch dose and hopefully break the habit. Short-acting products, like gum or lozenges, are also an option.