

Alcohol and breastfeeding

The safest option for breastfeeding women is to avoid drinking alcohol altogether. The concentration of alcohol in a breastfeeding woman's breastmilk is the same as the concentration in her blood. Alcohol will be present in a woman's breastmilk 30–60 minutes after she starts drinking.

If a breastfeeding woman plans to consume alcohol, it is best for her to plan ahead. This can allow her to express some of her milk for her baby ahead of time. Her infant can have this breastmilk if the mother misses a breastfeed while drinking alcohol or while she waits for the amount of alcohol in her breastmilk to drop.

The Feed Safe app (see link below) provides women with information, based on their weight and when they started drinking, about when their breastmilk will be free from alcohol. As a general rule, it takes 2 hours for an average woman to get rid of the alcohol from 1 standard alcoholic drink and therefore 4 hours for 2 drinks, 6 hours for 3 drinks and so on. The time is taken from the start of drinking. The Feed Safe app can help women work out these times more accurately.

'Pumping and dumping' (expressing breastmilk and throwing it away) will not reduce the amount of alcohol in a woman's breastmilk. Only time will reduce the amount of alcohol in her breastmilk.

Resources

Australian Breastfeeding Association
2018, *Alcohol and breastfeeding*,
Retrieved 18/1/20 from: <https://www.breastfeeding.asn.au/bf-info/safe-when-breastfeeding/alcohol-and-breastfeeding>

Brodribb, W. (ed) 2019, *Breastfeeding Management in Australia*.
5th ed. Australian Breastfeeding Association, Victoria.

<http://www.feedsafe.net/>



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