

Breastfeeding management **FACT SHEET** for health professionals

Medications and breastfeeding

Many mothers require some form of medication (including prescribed, over the counter or complementary medicines) during the postpartum period.

Breastfeeding mothers may be particularly anxious about taking medications due to concerns about the potential effect on their infant. Accurate information about the safety of medicines used during lactation is important to avoid unnecessary barriers to breastfeeding. Health professionals play an important role in prescribing appropriate medicines and providing guidance on their safe use during breastfeeding. This fact sheet provides a list of reputable resources that you can access for further information.

Breastfeeding women can safely use most common medicines at the recommended dose. While most drugs pass into breastmilk, many do so at low levels and present little risk to the healthy infant. A small number of drugs and specific situations (such as an unwell or premature baby) may be associated with an increased risk and necessitate greater caution. Any risk that a medication poses to the infant or the maternal milk supply must be weighed against the benefit to the health of the mother. Premature weaning and disruption of breastfeeding are also associated with risks to both infant and mother, and should be avoided unless necessary.

The following services can be contacted for further information about the safety of particular medications for breastfeeding or pregnant women:

Location	Service*	Telephone
ACT	NPS Medicines Line	1300 633 424
NSW	MotherSafe Royal Hospital for Women, Randwick	02 9382 6539 (Sydney metro) 1800 647 848 (NSW non-metro)
QLD	NPS Medicines Line	1300 633 424
SA	Medicines Information Centre Women's and Children's Hospital	08 8161 7222
TAS	NPS Medicines Line	1300 633 424
VIC	Medicines Information Centre Royal Women's Hospital	03 8345 3190
	Medicines Information Centre Monash Medical Centre	03 9594 2361
WA	Women & Newborn Health Services King Edward Memorial Hospital	08 6458 2723
All states & territories	NPS Medicines Line (9 am to 5 pm AEST)	1300 633 424
After hours (all states & territories)	Poisons Information (24 hours a day, 7 days a week)	13 11 26

*All services are available during local business hours, unless otherwise stated.



**Australian
Breastfeeding
Association**

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FACT SHEET

References and further reading

Book chapters and books:

McGuire, T. (2019). Safe use of drugs while breastfeeding. In W. Brodribb (Ed.), *Breastfeeding Management in Australia* (5th ed., pp. 279-323). Australian Breastfeeding Association.

Hale, T. W. (2021). *Hale's Medications & Mothers' Milk* (19th ed.). Springer Publishing.

Articles:

Amir et al (2011). [Breastfeeding: Evidence based guidelines for the use of medicines.](#)

Amir et al (2020). [Ethical issues in use of medications during lactation.](#)

Anderson & Momper (2020). [Clinical lactation studies and the role of pharmacokinetic modeling and simulation in predicting drug exposures in breastfed infants.](#)

Byrne & Spong (2019). ["Is it safe?" - The many unanswered questions about medications and breast-feeding.](#)

Datta et al (2019). [Balancing the use of medications while maintaining breastfeeding.](#)

Davanzo et al (2017). [Advising Mothers on the use of medications during breastfeeding: a need for a positive attitude.](#)

Hanley, L. (2020). [Medication use during lactation: Either a potential contributor to premature weaning or evidence-based support of the mother/child couplet.](#)

Hussainy & Dermele (2011). [Knowledge, attitudes and practices of health professionals and women towards medication use in breastfeeding: A review.](#)

McClatchey et al (2017). [Why does the need for medication become a barrier to breastfeeding? A narrative review.](#)

McGuire (2018). [Drugs affecting milk supply during lactation.](#)

Saha et al (2015). [Postpartum women's use of medicines and breastfeeding practices: A systematic review.](#)

Reputable online resources include:

LactMed Database

www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK501922/

LactMed is a free online database with information on drugs and lactation, aimed at health professionals and the breastfeeding mother.

It is hosted by the U.S. National Library of Medicine and regularly updated.

Perinatology website

www.perinatology.com/exposures/druglist.htm

This reference page features several links about drugs in pregnancy and breastfeeding.

Infant Risk Centre website

www.infantrisk.com

The Infant Risk Centre is a U.S. research centre with a focus on medication safety during pregnancy and lactation. The website includes a forum for questions from health professionals and mothers.

The InfantRisk app for healthcare professionals is available on the Apple App Store and Google Play.

Resources for families

Appropriate information for families can be found on the Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA) webpage, [breastfeeding and prescription medications](#). A range of online resources, including factsheets about common conditions and medications and their safety during breastfeeding, are also available to download from [The Royal Women's Hospital](#) and [MotherSafe](#).

Mothers may require additional support with breastfeeding during periods of acute illness or when diagnosed with a chronic medical condition. ABA breastfeeding counsellors do not provide advice about medical conditions or taking medications during breastfeeding. However, a call to the [National Breastfeeding Helpline](#) on 1800 686 268 may provide reassurance and support for the mother at this potentially challenging time.

Mothers with more complex health issues may benefit from ongoing breastfeeding support from an International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC). Lactation Consultants of Australia and New Zealand (LCANZ) have an online directory for mothers to [find a lactation consultant](#) in their area.



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