

Over-the-Counter Medications while Breastfeeding



Knowing what over-the-counter medications you can take while breastfeeding is important for your health and your baby's health. You should never take an over-the-counter or other medication while breastfeeding without talking to your healthcare provider first.

Below is a list of common over-the-counter medications that are known to be safe when breastfeeding. If you have questions about taking these medications, please contact us first.

For Pain: avoid products with aspirin.

Preferred medications include:

- Acetaminophen (no more than 3,000 mg within 24 hours)
- Ibuprofen (no more than 800 mg every 6 hours)
- Naproxen (Aleve) is less ideal than Ibuprofen because Naproxen has a longer half-life

For the Common Cold/Symptoms of a Cold: avoid all products with decongestants such as pseudoephedrine and phenylephrine, because these can cause a significant decrease in milk supply.

Preferred medications include:

- Cough medicines with guaifenesin (such as plain Robitussin)
- Cough medications with dextromethorphan (such as Robitussin DM)
- Nasal saline preparations
- Neti Pot

For Allergies:

Preferred medications include:

- Antihistamines such as loratadine (Claritin), fexofenadine (Allegra), or cetirizine (Zyrtec) for sneezing and itchy eyes/nose, itching, and hives
- Stronger antihistamines such as diphenhydramine (Benadryl) and chlorpheniramine (ChlorTrimeton) occasionally can cause irritability in the baby and might reduce the milk supply in high doses
- Nasal cromolyn sodium (NasalCrom)
- Topical OTC creams/ointments such as hydrocortisone

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For Heartburn:

Preferred medications include:

- Ranitidine (Zantac), famotidine (Pepcid)
- Omeprazole (Prilosec), lansoprazole (Prevacid)

For Constipation:

Preferred medications include:

- Docusate Sodium, which are stool softeners
- Milk of Magnesia
- Glycolax (Miralax), which is polyethylene glycol. This is not likely to enter the breastmilk.
- Dulcolax (Bisacodyl) does not enter breastmilk
- Psyllium does not enter breastmilk

For Diarrhea: Prescription lomotil (atropine /diphenoxylate) is not recommended during lactation.

Not much is known about anti-diarrheal medications during lactation, so it is best to use medications sparingly. Preferred medications include:

- Loperamide (Immodium), over-the-counter

For Motion Sickness:

Preferred medications include:

- Meclizine (Bonine), watch for infant sedation; in high doses, it could decrease maternal milk supply if used often.
- Dimenhydrinate (Dramamine), watch for infant sedation. In high doses, it could decrease maternal milk supply if used often.

Questions about OTC or prescription medications while pregnant or nursing?

Call the experts at the Infant Risk Center.

Monday—Friday: 8 am—5 pm CT

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Source:

<http://lacted.org/lable-breastfeeding-education-handouts/counter-medications-breastfeeding/>

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