

Breastfeeding and Alcohol

By Kelly Bonyata, IBCLC

Guidelines

- Current research says that occasional use of alcohol (1-2 drinks) does not appear to be harmful to the nursing baby.
- The [American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Drugs](#) classifies alcohol (ethanol) as a “Maternal Medication Usually Compatible with Breastfeeding.” The [American Academy of Pediatrics Section on Breastfeeding](#) notes: “Breastfeeding mothers should avoid the use of alcoholic beverages, because alcohol is concentrated in breast milk and its use can inhibit milk production. An occasional celebratory single, small alcoholic drink is acceptable, but breastfeeding should be avoided for 2 hours after the drink.”
- Many experts recommend against drinking more than 1-2 drinks per week.
- Per Hale (2008), “mothers who ingest alcohol in moderate amounts can generally return to breastfeeding as soon as they feel neurologically normal.”
- There is *no* need to pump & dump milk after drinking alcohol, other than for *mom’s comfort* — pumping & dumping does *not* speed the elimination of alcohol from the milk.
- Alcohol does **not** increase milk production, and has been shown to inhibit let-down and decrease milk production (see below).
- If you’re away from your baby, try to pump as often as baby usually nurses (this is to maintain milk supply, not because of the alcohol). At the very least, pump or hand express whenever you feel uncomfortably full — this will help you to avoid plugged ducts and mastitis.

In general, if you are sober enough to drive, you are sober enough to breastfeed. Less than 2% of the alcohol consumed by the mother reaches her blood and milk. Alcohol peaks in mom’s blood and milk approximately 1/2-1 hour after drinking (but there is considerable variation from person to person, depending upon how much food was eaten in the same time period, mom’s body weight and percentage of body fat, etc.). Alcohol does not accumulate in breast milk, but leaves the milk as it leaves the blood; so when your blood alcohol levels are back down, so are your milk alcohol levels.

Always keep in mind the baby’s age when considering the effect of alcohol. A newborn has a very immature liver, so minute amounts of alcohol would be more of a burden. Up until around 3 months of age, infants detoxify alcohol at around half the rate of an adult. An older baby or toddler can metabolize the alcohol more quickly.

Effects of alcohol on breastfeeding and the breastfed baby

- *Alcohol does not increase milk production.* In fact, babies nurse more frequently but take in less milk in the 3-4 hours after mom has had a drink, and one study showed a 23% decrease in milk volume with one drink (Mennella & Beauchamp 1991, 1993; Mennella 1997, 1999).
- 2+ drinks may inhibit let-down (Coiro et al 1992; Cobo 1974).
 - One study showed changes in the infant’s sleep-wake patterning after short-term exposure to small amounts of alcohol in breast milk — infants whose mothers were light drinkers slept less (Mennella & Gerrish 1998).
- Daily consumption of alcohol has been shown in the research to increase the risk for slow weight gain in the infant.
- Daily consumption of alcohol (1+ drinks daily) has been associated with a decrease in gross motor development (Little et al 1989).

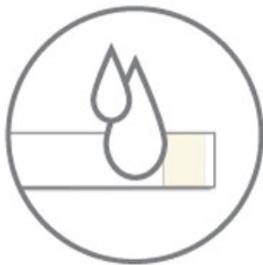
Test Your Breastmilk! Milkscreen is easy to use!

Alcohol can pass through your body and into your breast milk. About 2% of the alcohol you consume will enter your bloodstream and breast milk.

Because everyone metabolizes alcohol differently, the amount of time it takes for the alcohol to leave your breast milk also varies. Now, with milkscreen, a breast milk alcohol test, Mom can know in 2 minutes if her breast milk contains alcohol or not.

Simply saturate test pad with breast milk and read results in 2 minutes. ANY color change on the test pad at 2 minutes indicates that alcohol is present at or above 13.1 mg/dL.

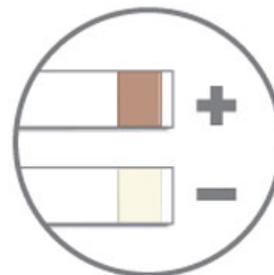
To ensure optimal results please read milkscreen test results exactly 2 minutes after saturating test pad with breast milk. Reading the test results before, or after, 2 minutes may cause an incorrect result.



Step 1



Step 2



Results

Where to buy Milkscreen: Walmart, Target, BabiesRUs or www.Milkscreen.com/where-to-buy