

Medication and donor breast milk:

All medication and herbal preparations have the potential to pass into breast milk in varying amounts, depending on the way the body processes it. Generally, only small amounts reach babies and term healthy babies can continue to be breastfed in the vast majority of circumstances.

When thinking about medications in donor milk, we need to consider who is receiving the milk (such as whether the baby is premature) and what other medication, herbs or supplements are taken by anyone else who provides milk for that baby (drug interactions). The receiving family is encouraged to consult their health care team if they are unsure about accepting donor milk that may contain medication.

In general breast milk with the lowest medication is preferable.

This list of medication that may be used by a mother donating breast milk (from the Human Milk Bank at Christchurch's Women Hospital):

- Paracetamol, Ibuprofen(occasional use)
- Progesterone only contraceptive pill, depot injections or IUD
- Asthma inhalers – both preventative inhalers, eg. beclomethasone or relievers, eg. salbutamol
- Insulin for type 1 diabetic mothers
- Levothyroxine
- Loratadine or Cetirizine as medication for hay fever
- Nasal sprays and drops to treat colds, eg. xylometazoline
- Simple linctus for coughs
- Beconase
- Nasal sprays or eye drops for hay fever, eg. sodium cromoglycate
- Loperamide
- Cough mixtures which do not cause drowsiness or contain decongestants
- Moisturisers for eczema
- Folic acid
- Vitamins
- Hepatitis vaccine
- Anti D
- Fluoride tablets
- Probiotics
- Magnesium and Zinc

We would need to avoid medications that:

- reach babies in significant amounts
- may cause drowsiness, such as codeine
- may cause diarrhoea resulting in fluid loss/dehydration such as antibiotics
- might make it hard for baby to breathe especially if already having difficulty ie very premature baby or baby on long term oxygen therapy
- might make them irritable or alter their behaviour
- might change the balance of micronutrients and chemicals within the blood
- may increase the risk of infection
- any nicotine-containing products including vapes and e-cigarettes

Breast milk donors need to temporarily stop donating breast milk if they have any of the following:

- Antibiotics – stop for one week
- Blood transfusion – four months
- Vaccinations such as flu, MMR, whooping cough and Covid Vaccine - one month

We only offer medicated milk outside these parameters with full disclosure and expect the recipient to consult their paediatrician or GP.

The use of alcohol and caffeine:

It is preferable to have a space between alcohol and pumping for donation after consuming alcohol. Donors are ok to have the occasional consumption of alcohol such as 1-2 drinks a week and milk to be labelled if consumed within 4 hours of pumping. <https://kellymom.com/bf/can-i-breastfeed/lifestyle/alcohol/>

Caffeine peaks in breast milk 1-2 hours after ingestion so pumping after this time is preferable or to label this milk as such. Babies can be sensitive to caffeine under 6 months. <https://kellymom.com/bf/can-i-breastfeed/lifestyle/caffeine/>

Useful resources to help make an informed choice:

- The UK's breastfeeding network has excellent breastfeeding information sheets <http://www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk/detailed-information/drugs-in-breast-milk/>
- Lactmed is a great place to read up on different medication and amounts in breast milk. Lactmed can be added to your phone as an APP. <https://toxnet.nlm.nih.gov/newtoxnet/lactmed.htm>
- Medsafe is the New Zealand medicines and medical devices safety authority. The link below is their information on medication in lactation, which includes a list of common medications and their safety in lactation. <https://www.medsafe.govt.nz/Profs/PUarticles/lactation.htm>
- The UK association of Milk banks link on donor milk and medicine (remembering most of their milk goes to premature babies): <http://www.ukamb.org/medication-and-breastfeeding/>
- Kellymom has a great page on how to determine if a medication is safe for a breastfeeding mother. <https://kellymom.com/hot-topics/med-risks/>