DRINKING WHILE NURSING: IS IT SAFE?

Many mothers learn that drinking alcohol during pregnancy is harmful to the baby. Before the baby is born, alcohol can affect the fetus by crossing the placenta. This can cause birth defects, miscarriage and a range of other harmful outcomes. But what about the effects of alcohol consumption while nursing?

Alcohol is shown to pass from the bloodstream to breast milk. As such, alcohol levels found in the mother's bloodstream are equivalent to those found in the mother's breast milk. Although there is not enough evidence to demonstrate the long-term effects of alcohol in the baby's milk supply, drinking while nursing is not advised.

Why? Alcohol is found to...

1) **Reduce the production of breast milk** (by about 20%).
   The let-down of milk supply is also reduced as alcohol prevents the body's natural chemical, oxytocin, from releasing breast milk.

2) **Change the odor and taste of breast milk.**

3) **Disrupt nursing infant sleeping patterns**
   (shortening of sleep intervals).
   Excess alcohol levels in breast milk are also found to cause drowsiness and/or issues with motor functions in nursing infants. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends nursing mothers avoid alcohol consumption in its entirety.

If you have had an alcoholic beverage and are unsure about when it is safe to feed your baby...

**DO** wait at least 2-2.5 hours per alcoholic drink before breastfeeding.* (For each drink, it is recommended to wait an additional 2-2.5 hours).

**DO NOT** drink excess water, “pump and dump” breast milk, exercise or take caffeine in an effort to get rid of alcohol in your body as these will not work.

*For heavy drinkers (2+ drinks daily), a longer wait is recommended.


**Questions? Contact Us!**

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or

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