



What You Need to Know About Breastfeeding While Taking Prescribed Amphetamines

If you have been prescribed amphetamines (such as Adderall) for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) or narcolepsy, you may have questions about whether it is safe to breastfeed your baby. This handout provides important information to help you make an informed decision with your healthcare provider.

Important Distinction: Prescribed vs. Illicit Use

Medical guidelines that recommend against breastfeeding while using amphetamines are specifically referring to illicit drug abuse, not prescribed therapeutic use [1-3]. The decision about breastfeeding while taking prescribed amphetamines should be individualized based on your specific situation, weighing the benefits of breastfeeding against potential risks to your baby.

What We Know About Amphetamines in Breast Milk

Research shows that amphetamines do pass into breast milk, but the amount your baby receives is relatively small: [4-5]

- The amount of medication in breast milk that reaches your baby (called the "relative infant dose") ranges from approximately 2% to 14% of your dose when adjusted for weight
- In one study, the infant's blood level of the medication was only about 9% of the mother's blood level
- The milk-to-plasma ratio ranges from 1.9 to 7.5, meaning the medication does concentrate somewhat in breast milk

What We Know About Effects on Babies

A recent study followed 13 babies whose mothers took prescribed amphetamines while breastfeeding: [6]

- All children showed normal development in motor skills, thinking abilities, social-emotional health, and physical health
- Some babies experienced irritability, constipation, or colic
- No serious adverse effects were reported

However, this was a small study, and more research is needed to fully understand long-term effects.



Potential Concerns

- High doses of amphetamines might reduce milk production, especially if breastfeeding is not yet well-established [5]
- Babies may experience irritability, poor sleep, or feeding difficulties [6]
- Long-term effects on infant brain development are not well-studied

Strategies to Reduce Your Baby's Exposure

If you and your healthcare provider decide that breastfeeding while taking amphetamines is appropriate for you, consider these strategies:

- If you take immediate-release (short-acting) amphetamines, you might time your dose to coincide with breastfeeding, which may help avoid peak medication levels in your milk
- Watch your baby closely for signs of irritability, poor feeding, or sleep problems
- Ensure your milk supply is well-established before starting or continuing the medication

Making Your Decision

The decision to breastfeed while taking prescribed amphetamines is personal and should be made together with your healthcare provider. Consider:

- The severity of your ADHD or narcolepsy symptoms and how they affect your ability to care for your baby
- Whether alternative medications with more established breastfeeding safety data might work for you
- The many benefits of breastfeeding for both you and your baby
- Your baby's health status and any special considerations

What to Watch For

If you breastfeed while taking amphetamines, contact your baby's healthcare provider if you notice:

- Excessive irritability or jitteriness
- Poor feeding or weight gain
- Unusual sleep patterns (either too much or too little sleep)
- Any other concerning changes in your baby's behavior

The Bottom Line

While guidelines recommend against breastfeeding for people who abuse amphetamines, the limited research on prescribed therapeutic use suggests it may be compatible with breastfeeding in many cases [6-7]. However, each situation is unique, and this decision should be made in consultation with both your healthcare provider and your baby's pediatrician.



References

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