

Breastfeeding During Mother's Illness

1. What happens if mom becomes sick? Should she still breastfeed?

- For most illnesses (such as a common cold, cough, fever, or diarrhea), keep breastfeeding!
- Breast Milk provides mother's antibodies for the infant, which helps protect the infant from contracting the full illness by helping his or her immune system fight it off.

2. What can I do to prevent spreading the illness to my baby?

- Wash your hands well and consider wearing a mask if you have a respiratory illness.
- If it's a GI illness, make sure to wash your hands very well especially after using the bathroom.
- If you have respiratory symptoms, be careful not to cough or sneeze on the baby, and be sure to use hand sanitizer or wash your hands after blowing your nose.
- Try to avoid kissing the infant while you are symptomatic to avoid spreading germs.

3. What medications can mother take while breastfeeding?

- Always check with your doctor (or give us a call) about other medications to use during breastfeeding.
- Generally, it's best to take the medication(s) at the end of a feeding.
- Be sure to check the label to make sure the medications are not combined with other products that may not be safe to use.
- **For Pain or Fever:** Ibuprofen (Advil) or acetaminophen (Tylenol) are safe to use in breastfeeding moms. Aspirin (325 mg) should not be used.
- **Allergy meds:** Commonly used allergy meds are generally okay (i.e., cetirizine, loratadine). Benadryl is not harmful for the baby but may encourage milk supply to decrease, so we usually don't recommend it for this reason.
- **Nose Sprays:** Saline and allergy steroid nasal sprays (like flonase) are safe. A decongestant spray (like Afrin) can be used as well.
- **Decongestants:** Not recommended as they can decrease milk supply (i.e. Sudafed).
- **Cough Meds:** Products like dextromethorphan (DM) have not been shown to be safe or harmful to use during breastfeeding, so we recommend to use with caution. However, cough drops and honey are safe to use - just be sure **NOT** to give honey to an infant less than 1 year old.

Call Your Doctor Back If...

- You become worse
- You think you need to be seen
- Your baby becomes sick
- You have other questions or concerns

This handout is intended for informational purposes only and should not be used as a substitute for the care and advice of a medical professional. The accuracy of the information contained in this handout is not guaranteed and there may be variations in treatment that your doctor or nurse may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

Edited by Pediatric Associates of Austin