

Guidelines for the Prescribing of Medication during Lactation

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VALIDITY – Documents should be accessed via the Trust intranet to ensure the current version is used.

CHANGE RECORD

Version	Date	Change details
1.00	November 2010	
2.00	March 2013	<i>New Guideline format, Chart design modification, no change in contents.</i>
3.00	May 2017	<i>Reviewed and updated</i>
4.00	Oct 2020	<i>Email addresses/phone numbers updated. Trust name and logo updated. Pharmacy dept contact updated. New info added as requested by the perinatal team.</i>
5.00	30 Nov 2023	<i>Reviewed. UKDILAS link updated and RRS updated to MHCIT. Approved at Drugs and Therapeutics Group (30 November 2023).</i>

Prescribing during Lactation

Literature on the use of drugs in breastfeeding is often over-cautious and there are no published controlled studies on the safety of psychotropic medication during breast feeding. Contraindication to breast feeding in the manufacturer's data sheet is often based on lack of evidence rather than known adverse effects. As data is only available in case reports and case series, it is essential that women receive the best possible advice to assist them in making informed choices.

Breastfeeding is considered one of the most important measures to improve child health in all societies and health professionals are ideally placed to actively promote and facilitate its practice.

General Principles

- Involve the breastfeeding mother fully in the decision-making process
- Seek support and advice from Maternal Health Link Practitioner or the Perinatal Mental Health Team (see below)
- Obtain current specialist advice from [Medicines Information](#)
- Use only information sources recommended by Humber Teaching NHS Foundation Trust
- Planning for breastfeeding should be started as early as at preconception or during the pregnancy if a new medication is considered
- Assess the benefit/risk ratio for both mother and infant
- Avoid unnecessary drug use and limit use of over the counter (OTC) products
- Treat only when necessary
- Premature infants are at a greater risk from exposure to drugs
- Infants with renal, hepatic, cardiac or neurological impairment are at greater risk
- Monitor infants for specific adverse effects of drugs, feeding patterns, growth and development
- Provide feedback on outcome to [The Trent and West Midlands Medicines Information Centre UK Drugs in Lactation Advisory Service \(UKDILAS\)](#)
- Where possible continue the same medication given during pregnancy
- Use the lowest effective dose and avoid polypharmacy
- Avoid drugs with a long half-life
- Consider timing feeds to avoid peak drug levels in milk

Healthcare professionals should **never** advise, unequivocally, that a medication is either harmful or safe during breastfeeding. Instead, they should make enquiries using Trust-approved sources of information to discuss risks and benefits with the patient on an individual basis

Recommended Information Sources

UKDILAS – United Kingdom Drugs in Lactation Advisory Services

This service provides the most up to date resource, as it holds the national data base on the use of medication during breast feeding. They can be contacted directly by telephone on 0116 258 6491 or 0121 424 7298 or via email: ukdilas.enquiries@nhs.net. The enquirer is responsible for involving all members of the health care team that provide care to an individual, to avoid the potential for conflicting advice.

Maudsley Prescribing Guidelines and Psychotropic Drug Directory

These publications are excellent resources regarding therapeutic considerations; the latest edition should always be used. Although summary of knowledge regarding specific drugs is given to date, this should not be used as a sole basis for decision making. Inclusion of information can be taken as a guide but absence of information does not imply anything about the status of a specific medication.

BNF

The most current edition of the British National Formulary gives basic advice on the risks of drug treatment in breast feeding for a specific medication in the drug monograph. It must be noted that the absence of data does not imply safety.

SmPC-Summary of Product Characteristics

This is produced as part of the drug licensing application process. As there is no requirement under the licensing system to investigate drug excretion into breast milk, the information included is limited. Where included, information is often cautious and based on lack of investigation.

Internet

Use of the internet as a source of information should be undertaken with extreme caution and restricted to validated sites such as UKDILAS.

Pharmacists

Where available pharmacists can co-ordinate and advise accordingly, the Trust Pharmacy department can be contacted on 01482 389113.

The Hull and East Yorkshire Perinatal Mental Health Liaison Service

This service works closely with midwives and health visitors (who can refer women through the Mental Health Crisis Intervention Team) and takes referrals from GPs and community mental health teams. Referrals can be made via the Mental Health Crisis Intervention Team on 0800 138 0990

Prescribing during Lactation Flowchart

