

MYTHS SURROUNDING ALCOHOL & BREASTFEEDING

Myth: “Pumping and dumping” is the only way to eliminate alcohol from breast milk.

Reality: The common practice of ‘pumping and dumping’ or draining the breasts does not remove alcohol from breast milk. Breast milk is made from blood so as long you have alcohol in your blood there could also be alcohol in your breast milk. Drinking a lot of water, resting, or drinking coffee will not speed up the rate of the elimination of the alcohol from your body. With time, your blood alcohol level will decline and your body will naturally rid the breast milk of the alcohol.

Myth: Drinking alcohol while breastfeeding has no negative side effects on the baby.

Reality: The American Academy of Pediatrics says an occasional alcoholic drink probably will not hurt baby, but a mother who chooses to have a drink should wait a few hours before breastfeeding. If alcohol is left in the breast milk and has a concentration level above 0.03% medical research indicates that the infant may experience a change in sleeping and eating behaviors. Daily consumption of alcohol (1+ drink daily) has been shown in the research to increase the risk for slow weight gain and decrease in gross motor development in the infant.

Myth: After consuming alcohol, women should wait a 2-3 hours before breastfeeding.

Reality: Because every woman’s metabolism is different, there is no sure, safe waiting time that is right for everyone. Too many factors influence metabolism including mom’s weight, amount of alcohol consumed, amount of food eaten, etc. Depending on these factors, it could take 30 minutes for one woman’s system to rid itself of the alcohol and 5 hours for another. Actually testing your breast milk is the only way to know when it is best to breastfeed after consuming alcohol.

Myth: A little alcohol will help baby to sleep better.

Reality: Babies that consume breast milk with alcohol concentration levels above 0.03% may experience a change in their sleeping patterns including sleeping less soundly and waking more frequently.

Myth: If you are sober enough to drive, then you are okay to breastfeed.

Reality: Even though a woman may think she is okay to drive after consuming alcohol, she really may have an alcohol concentration level in her breast milk that could have negative effects on baby.

Myth: There is no way to test for alcohol in breast milk.

Reality: There is an at home test kit that detects the presence of alcohol in breast milk. The Milkscreen test for alcohol in breast milk requires only a few drops of breast milk and provides women with accurate results in 2 minutes. www.milkscreen.com