

Safe Use of Medications While Breastfeeding

There are common medical issues you may have while breastfeeding, and some medications could cause side effects for you or your baby. The medications listed here are generally considered safe for you to take, but be sure to read the “Important Information” sections.

Medical Issue	Safe Medications	Important Information
Pain/Fever	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Acetaminophen (Tylenol) ■ Ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil) 	<p>Don't use aspirin unless directed by your health care provider as it can cause bleeding problems in your baby.</p>
Severe Pain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Prescription pain medications (opioids): Oxycodone/acetaminophen (Percocet), hydrocodone/acetaminophen (Vicodin, Norco, Lortab) 	<p>Not recommended for long-term use. Breastfeeding women using opioids for pain relief should watch their baby for drowsiness or feeding problems, including not waking for feedings.</p>
Allergies/ Sinus Congestion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Saline nasal spray ■ Loratadine (Claritin) ■ Diphenhydramine (Benadryl) ■ Fluticasone (Flonase) ■ Oxymetazoline (Afrin) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Don't use pseudoephedrine (Sudafed) or other allergy/sinus medications unless directed by your health care provider as they may decrease milk production. ■ Don't use oxymetazoline (Afrin) for more than three days ■ Diphenhydramine (Benadryl) may be used occasionally and only for a short time.
Cough/Cold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Expectorant (thins mucus): Guaifenesin (Robitussin, Mucinex) ■ Cough suppressant (reduces cough): Dextromethorphan (Delsym) ■ Combination expectorant and cough suppressant: Guaifenesin and dextromethorphan (Robitussin DM, Mucinex DM) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Always check the active ingredients as there are many versions. Certain medications, like NyQuil, have a high alcohol content and shouldn't be taken. ■ Sore throat sprays, lozenges or cough drops are usually considered safe. Avoid taking large amounts of cough drops containing menthol as this may decrease milk production.
Heartburn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Aluminum/magnesium hydroxide (Maalox, Mylanta) ■ Calcium carbonate (Tums) ■ Famotidine (Pepcid) 	
Diarrhea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Loperamide (Imodium A-D) 	<p>Don't use bismuth-containing medications (Pepto-Bismol, Kaopectate) as they contain salicylates (similar to aspirin) which may be harmful to your baby.</p>
Gas Relief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Simethicone (Gas-X) 	
Constipation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Bisacodyl (Dulcolax) ■ Senna (Senokot) ■ Docusate (Colace) ■ Psyllium (Metamucil) 	

Important Tips

- Ask your health care provider before taking any of these medications if you have any other medical conditions (high blood pressure, diabetes, etc.).
- If you have questions, ask your pharmacist, physician or BayCare Lactation Services if a medication is safe to use during breastfeeding.
- Always read the label on your medications. Some over-the-counter products contain more than one medication ingredient.
- Avoid elixirs as some contain alcohol.
- Talk to your health care provider before taking any herbal products.

