

DRUG INFORMATION

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SAFETY OF CODEINE IN BREASTFEEDING

Question:

What is the safety of codeine in breastfeeding?

Answer:

Maternal use of standard doses of codeine is generally considered to be compatible with breastfeeding^[1,2]. Standard therapeutic doses are associated with transfer of insignificant amounts of codeine into breast milk. Limited data suggests that an infant is likely to receive 1-2% of the maternal dose, after adjusting for the difference in body weight^[3]. We usually consider that an infant dose of less than 10% of the maternal dose (weight-adjusted) is considered compatible with breastfeeding.

Conclusions:

The use of codeine does not appear to be problematical in breastfeeding although it would be prudent to monitor the infant for evidence of opioid side effects such as constipation, sedation and respiratory depression.

References:

1. Drugdex, Micromedex database
2. Briggs GG *et al.* Drugs in Pregnancy and Lactation (5th ed), 1998
3. Bennett PN. Drugs and Human Lactation (2nd ed), 1996

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