# Drugs and Alcohol while Providing Breast Milk

When you are giving your baby your breast milk, remember that things you eat, drink and breathe can pass to your baby in the breast milk. Drugs and alcohol can hurt your infant.

**Marijuana (pot) should not be used when providing breast milk:**

- If breast milk is used, infants could develop learning problems
- They may also have increased activity and not be able to pay attention when older. This is known as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder or ADHD
- The active chemical in marijuana is tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), which can stay in breast tissue
- THC goes into breast milk for weeks after using marijuana
- You will not test positive for THC from secondhand smoke

**Illegal Drugs:**

- Street drugs such as cocaine, PCP, amphetamines (speed), heroin and ecstasy should not be used when providing breast milk
- They pass to the baby while you provide breast milk
- A mother's drug use can cause poor weight gain, and delayed growth and development. It may be medically required to have a drug test done on you or your baby

**Prescribed Medication:**

- Drugs ordered by your doctor may be safe to use when providing breast milk. You need to ask your infant's doctor and/or a lactation consultant if the drug is safe
- We want you to tell the medical team about all drugs or alcohol that you are taking
- There are some drugs your doctor may want you to take that can be bad for your baby. Make sure you tell your doctor that you are breastfeeding

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), women who are giving breast milk for a sick infant should not drink alcohol. Alcohol does not help make more milk.

**Smoking and Breastfeeding:**

- Breast milk is the perfect nutrition for your baby
- It is encouraged that mothers who breast feed do not smoke
- You can still breast feed your baby if you smoke
- The health risks of not breastfeeding are far greater than the risks of smoking and breastfeeding.
- Nicotine use in a breastfeeding mother can cause a decrease in breast milk supply and can lead to poor infant growth
- Smoke as few cigarettes as possible each day
- Smoke AFTER feedings. This allows for the level of nicotine in the milk to decrease before the next feeding
- Smoke outside and away from your baby
- Wear a smoking shirt or jacket when smoking. Remove it after smoking and leave it outside
- If using a nicotine patch, do not smoke. This will cause you to have high nicotine levels

For more information on secondhand smoke visit: https://www.lung.org/quit-smoking/smoking-facts/health-effects/secondhand-smoke

For more information on how to quit smoking, please see https://www.lung.org/quit-smoking/i-want-to-quit

The health care team is here to answer your questions. The team is here to support you and your family's goal to give safe nutrition for your baby.

**Call the Children's Mercy Hospital Breastfeeding and Pumping helpline at (816) 346-1309 if you have questions or concerns**