

Can breastfeeding mothers take ibuprofen?

Prepared by UK Medicines Information ([UKMi](#)) pharmacists for NHS healthcare professionals
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Summary

- Ibuprofen is one of the painkillers of choice whilst breastfeeding
- Only very small amounts of ibuprofen pass into the breast milk, and these amounts are far below the doses that would normally be given to infants directly
- The properties of ibuprofen are such that there is no risk of it building up in the infant's system.
- There have been no side-effects reported in infants exposed to ibuprofen through breast milk
- Ibuprofen is widely available to purchase as an over-the counter medicine and is also found in some cold and flu remedies.
- This guidance also applies to ibuprofen formulated as the lysine salt.
- This guidance applies to infants born full term and healthy. If an infant is unwell, or premature, or the mother is taking multiple medicines, then an individual risk assessment will need to be made.
- See the latest NHS advice regarding the use of ibuprofen to **manage the symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19)**: www.nhs.uk/medicines/ibuprofen-for-adults/.
- **If a breastfeeding mother is infected with coronavirus (COVID-19) it is still advisable for her to breastfeed her infant since the benefits of breastfeeding outweigh any risk of transmission of the infection. For the latest guidance, see [Public Health England](#).**

Background

Ibuprofen is a medicine used to relieve pain and inflammation for a variety of conditions (1). It can be prescribed, but it is normally purchased as an over-the-counter medicine. It is also available within some cold and flu products.

Breastfeeding mothers may find themselves needing pain relief for a variety of conditions, and therefore advising on suitability in this population is essential.

Amounts in breast milk

Despite ibuprofen being widely used in all age groups for a number of pain related conditions, there is still very little published evidence for its use in breastfeeding.

In two studies, involving 13 lactating women, where ibuprofen was administered it was not detected in breast milk. Infants were not breastfeeding in either study (3, 4).

In a further single case study, a breastfeeding woman had very low and insignificant amounts of ibuprofen detected in her breast milk. These levels approximated to an infant intake of 100 micrograms in 24 hours (5).

In a study to determine the infant dose of ibuprofen through breastfeeding, 13 breastfeeding mothers who had taken ibuprofen at regular intervals at least 7 days after delivery were included (6). The infants received a mean dose of 68 micrograms/kg/day of ibuprofen from breast milk, which is significantly below the therapeutic dose of 15–20mg/kg/day recommended for infants aged 1–2 months (2).

Side-effects

In a telephone follow-up study, no side effects were noted in 21 breastfed infants whose mothers were taking ibuprofen (7). All other studies looking at ibuprofen in breast milk have also not reported any side-effects in the infants exposed.

Limitations

Evidence relating to the excretion of ibuprofen in breast milk is limited and relatively old, although they consistently show low or no detectable levels in breast milk. The pharmacodynamic and pharmacokinetic properties of ibuprofen and its extensive use without any reports of adverse effects in breastfed infants, provides reassurance

The above information applies to maternal monotherapy and a full-term, fit and healthy infant only. Should the infant be premature, unwell, or the mother taking multiple medication, an individual risk assessment is required. Please contact the UK Drugs in Lactation Advisory Service for advice on 0116 258 6491/0121 424 7298 or ukdilas.enquiries@nhs.net.

References

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7. Ito S, Blajchman A, Stephenson M et al. Prospective follow-up of adverse reactions in breast-fed infants exposed to maternal medication. *Am J Obstet Gynecol* 1993;168:1393-1399

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