

Q. HOW DO I KNOW IF I COULD BE AT HIGHER RISK OF AN ALCOHOL USE DISORDER*?

A. Some families and individuals are at higher risk even with one alcoholic drink. You are likely to be at higher risk if you answer “yes” to two or more of the following questions:

- 1) Have you ever felt that you should cut down on your drinking of alcohol?
- 2) Have people annoyed you by criticizing your drinking?
- 3) Have you ever felt bad or guilty about your drinking?
- 4) Have you ever had a drink first thing in the morning to steady your nerves or get rid of a hangover?

Please don't drink if you are at higher risk.

*An alcohol use disorder is an unhealthy condition related to excess use, dependence, and/or addiction to alcohol.

References:

- “Alcohol.” www.toxnet.nlm.nih.gov . Click on LactMed database, then search “alcohol.”
- “Alcohol.”, www.infantrisk.com
- Hale, Thomas. “Ethanol.” Medications and Mothers' Milk. Hale Publishing, Amarillo, TX. 2014.
- Mohrbacher, N. Breastfeeding Answers Made Simple. Hale Publishing, Amarillo, TX. 2010.

This information is intended to help answer questions, not to take the place of medical advice.

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ALCOHOL AND BREASTFEEDING:

ANSWERS TO FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS.



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Updated December 2015

EFFECTS OF ALCOHOL

Q. HOW DOES ALCOHOL AFFECT MY BABY DURING PREGNANCY?

A. During pregnancy, drinking alcohol can cause birth defects and brain damage. The more you drink, the greater the risk of permanently harming your unborn child.

Q. CAN I DRINK AND STILL BREASTFEED MY BABY?

A. After the first month, one drink or less per day has not been found to be harmful for a healthy nursing baby if the mother waits to nurse 2 — 2.5 hours afterward. For women, one drink per day, with meals, is considered moderate. Chronic or heavy users should not breastfeed.

Newborn, premature, and sick infants are at greater risk from alcohol's side effects than older, healthy infants.

The less you drink, the better.

Q. HOW LONG SHOULD I WAIT TO BREASTFEED AFTER HAVING A DRINK?

A. Alcohol passes freely into and out of your breastmilk. Weight, food intake, and type of alcohol consumed all affect alcohol levels. Breastmilk has the highest level of alcohol one hour after drinking. Eating a meal and breastfeeding or pumping right before drinking may lead to a lower peak level of alcohol in breastmilk.

A mother may generally breastfeed after about **2 — 2.5 hours per drink**, when she feels normal again.

Example: If you drink 2 cans of beer, plan to wait 4-6 hours before breastfeeding. Pump your breasts for comfort until the alcohol is out of your system and discard the milk or freeze for later.

Mother's Weight	Approximate Time to Eliminate One Alcohol Containing Drink
120 pounds	2 1/2 hours
150 pounds	2 1/4 hours
180 pounds	2 hours

Q. WHAT IS ONE DRINK?

A.

One drink	=	12 oz. can of 4.5% beer
One drink	=	4 oz. of 12% wine
One drink	=	1 oz. of 100 proof liquor

Q. WHAT ARE THE RISKS CONNECTED TO DRINKING AND BREASTFEEDING?

A. Excess levels may cause infant drowsiness, deep sleep, weakness, irritability, shorter periods of sleep, slow growth, and possible delayed motor development. Drinking also impairs mom's ability to care for her baby and can interfere with milk let-down and taste.

An adult with alcohol in his or her system should not share a bed with a baby.

Alcohol reacts negatively with many medications and controlled substances. Talk with your doctor.



THINK ABOUT WHAT DRINKING MIGHT DO TO ME.

Q. WHAT ELSE SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT ALCOHOL AND BREASTFEEDING?

A. Contrary to popular belief, drinking beer does not increase milk supply. While barley may stimulate prolactin, alcohol actually reduces milk letdown and baby's milk intake.