

"Medication and Mothers' milk. How to make the most recent information easy accessible for all breastfeeding mothers and their consultants."

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Objectives:

To make the most recent breast feeding-friendly information about the combination of medication and human milk easily accessible to breastfeeding mothers and to all health workers.
To reduce the amount of unnecessary breastfeeding-interruptions due to the intake of medication by breastfeeding mothers.

Introduction:

Figures of mothers taking medication are increasing in time and figures of breastfeeding percentages increase as well. Knowledge among doctors and other health workers about the combination "medication and breastfeeding" usually lags grossly behind. Which results in following the package insert instead of the latest research and articles in literature. To be "on the safe side" pharmaceutical industries recommend discontinuation of breast feeding when using a medicine as soon as the presence in mothers' milk is demonstrated, even if pharmacokinetic information almost excludes the possibility of absorption in the babies' gut. This recommendation results in too many babies not being breastfed for incorrect reasons. Updated information about breastfeeding and medication is usually difficult to obtain by mothers and even doctors.

Methods:

With informed consent of Thomas Hale, Pharmacologist PhD, we created a list of approximately 675 different medications (generic names in alphabetical order) and their compatibility with breastfeeding, using the most recent version of the book of Thomas Hale (Medication and Mothers' milk) ¹ and the recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) ². We published this list on one of the Dutch breastfeeding-sites on the Internet ³ in English as well as in Dutch. Updates of the list were and will be created at least every two years.

Results:

Hales' book described over **675** medications using recent studies on pharmacologic details and outcomes in clinical trials. Many of them could be considered safe or moderately safe where the package insert still recommended discontinuation of breastfeeding. Almost **190** of these medications were also described by the AAP. The AAP appeared to be as tolerant as Hale and even more tolerant in ten of the drugs they described. This increased tolerance is mainly due to ignorance of the effect on milk production or the effect of prolonged exposure. Therefore the AAP-list appeared to be important (especially in the process of convincing prescribing doctors) but in quality and quantity less helpful than Hales' recommendations.

We published the list on one of the biggest Dutch Internet sites on breastfeeding to make the information easily accessible and a useful reference for mothers and their doctors. During the past two years this resulted in about 250 monthly references of the site, more babies being safely breastfed and several e-mails a month from grateful mothers who expressed their happiness about being able to continue breastfeeding.

The list is now (2008) translated in English (with informed consent of the author of the book) in order to reach an even bigger, international public.

Conclusions:

1. **Pharmaceutical industries lack enough interest in breastfeeding**
2. **Updated information about breastfeeding with medication is available**
3. **Publishing this information on the Internet makes it accessible and useful for breastfeeding mothers and their doctors**

[www.borstvoeding.com/
problemen/medicijnen
/medicijnlijst-
e.html](http://www.borstvoeding.com/problemen/medicijnen/medicijnlijst-e.html)

Medications and
Mothers' Milk

Thirteenth Edition



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Thomas W. Hale, PhD

Literature:

1. aappolicy.aappublications.org/cgi/content/full/pediatrics;108/3/776 (policy-statement of the AAP on medication and breastfeeding)
2. Medication and Mothers' milk. A Manual of lactational Pharmacology 2008. Author: Thomas W. Hale, Ph.D. (Hale publishing ISBN: 978-0-9815257-2-3)
3. www.borstvoeding.com/problemen/medicijnen/medicijnlijst-e.html (Medication and breastfeeding: an explanatory list for mothers and professionals)