

Herbs and Breastfeeding Breakdown

When it comes to the safe use of herbs while breastfeeding the lists are not all black and white. There is more to consider than just if an herb is toxic or not. Generally 1-10% of the maternal dose of an herb will enter the milk supply. The specific constituents of the plant will determine how they cross the blood-breast barrier and how long they will linger in the breast milk. Age of the child and frequency of feedings are also a factor to consider. For example, a neonate who is exclusively nursing will receive more compounds in a body that is less developed than a 7 month old who is eating solid food and who's liver and kidneys are fully functional. Other facets of the picture to consider is how long the mother will be taking the herb(s), and will they increase or decrease her milk supply. Also, when sourcing herbs please do so from reputable sources to avoid contamination from potentially harmful substances or mislabeled product. If you are seeking herbal medicine and have any questions, please contact a professional care provider.

Herbs to absolutely avoid have a pattern of having adverse effects such as hepatotoxicity, neurotoxicity, endocrine disruption, GI distress, or stimulant activity. Herbs with anti-coagulant activity tend to make it on the breastfeeding "no" list as well.

Potentially harmful herbs while breastfeeding

**indicates safe for topical use*

Barberry	Comfrey*	Lily of the valley
Black Cohosh	Coptis	Lobelia
Blood Root	Damiana	Meadowsweet
Blue Cohosh	Dong quai	Mate Leaves
Blue Flag	Ephedra	Poke root
Borage	Gentian	Pasque flower
Bugleweed	Goat's rue	Red root
Butterbur	Golden seal*	Sage
Castor	Guarana	Salvia
Cat's Claw	Gymnema	Saw palmetto
Celandine	Horsetail	Senna leaf
Coleus	Kava	Tobacco
Coltsfoot	Licorice	Thuja

Thyme

Witch hazel*

Yerba mansa

Tribulus

Wormwood

Yohimbe

Willow

Yarrow*

Please note that herbs in the amounts used for culinary purposes are generally safe

Galactagogues: herbs that will increase milk supply

Alfalfa

Caraway

Marshmallow root

Anise seed

Chaste berry

Nettle

Barley

Fennel Seed

Oats

Blessed Thistle

Fenugreek

Dill

Hops

Herbs that will decrease milk supply

Cabbage leaves

Parsley

Peppermint

Spearmint

Sage