

Alcohol and Lactation



With a little planning you can occasionally drink alcohol and chest/breastfeed. It's not safe to nurse your baby while taking alcohol with other downers like benzodiazepines or opioids.

What is alcohol?

Alcohol is a “downer” that slows down your breathing, heart rate and the messages between your brain and body. Alcohol is in beer, wine, malt beverages, liquor, and some medicines.

Can alcohol enter human milk?

Yes. The amount of alcohol in your chest/breastmilk will be about the same as the amount of alcohol in your blood. Alcohol levels are usually highest in your milk 30-60 minutes after you drink alcohol. It's completely gone 2-3 hours after drinking one drink.

What to do before, during, and after drinking alcohol

Before drinking alcohol:

- Plan for feeding your baby. Pump and store your milk, buy infant formula, or buy donor milk.
- Eat a meal and pump before you start drinking. Pumping milk and eating both lower how much alcohol your body will absorb.








After drinking alcohol:

- You can feed your baby infant formula, donor milk, or milk you pumped before drinking alcohol.
- You can pump for comfort and discard your milk until your milk is free of alcohol.
- Pumping as often as you usually feed your baby is a good way to maintain your milk supply.
- You can use a chest/breastmilk alcohol test strip to know if your milk is free of alcohol.

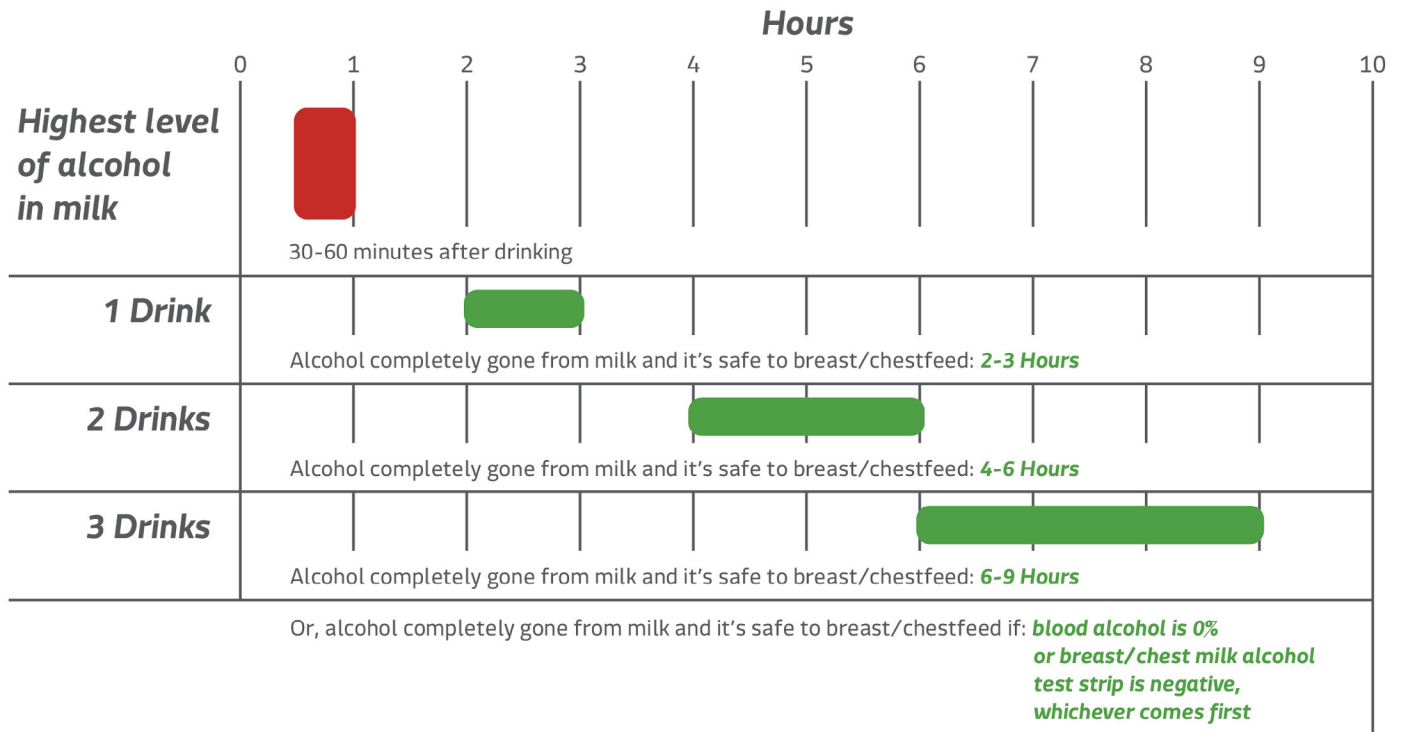
How long should you pump and discard your milk before chest/breastfeeding again?

If you weigh:	You should wait this long per standard drink before breast/chestfeeding (your milk will be alcohol-free):
90 pounds (lb) (40.8 kilogram (kg))	2 hours 50 minutes (170 minutes)
120 lb (52.2 kg)	2 hours 30 minutes (150 minutes)
150 lb (68.0 kg)	2 hours 14 minutes (134 minutes)
180 lb (81.6 kg)	2 hours 1 minute (121 minutes)
210 lb (95.3 kg)	1 hour 51 minutes (111 minutes)

What's a standard drink?

12 fl oz of REGULAR BEER	8-9 fl oz of MALT LIQUOR	5 fl oz of TABLE WINE	3-4 fl oz of FORTIFIED WINE	2-3 fl oz of CORDIAL, LIQUEUR OR APERITIF	1.5 fl oz of BRANDY OR COGNAC (a single jigger or shot)	1.5 fl oz shot of 80-PROOF DISTILLED SPIRITS (gin, rum, tequila, vodka, whiskey, etc.)
						
about 5% alcohol	about 7% alcohol	about 12% alcohol	about 17% alcohol	about 24% alcohol	about 40% alcohol	about 40% alcohol

Alcohol in your milk after drinking



Keeping you and your baby healthy and safe

- Take a multivitamin with iodine and eat brightly colored fruits and vegetables to increase the nutrition in your milk.
- Talk to your baby's healthcare provider if your baby is more sleepy than usual, has difficulty eating or is constipated.
- Get a babysitter for the time you are intoxicated.
- Don't drive while you're under the influence of alcohol.
- Avoid sleeping with your baby after drinking alcohol. You are at a higher risk of accidentally suffocating your baby. The safest sleep arrangement is to share the same room with your baby in their own crib.
- You can reduce the negative effects on your baby by drinking less alcohol, drinking less often, and waiting until your milk doesn't have alcohol in it to nurse your baby.
- Store alcohol and substances securely. This is especially important if toddlers or other children are in the house.
 - **If you think your baby has swallowed alcohol**, call Poison Control at 800-222-1222.
 - **Call 911** if your baby has slow breathing, stops breathing, is difficult to wake, has skin or lips that look blue, is lethargic, too sleepy, or has vomiting and/or diarrhea that won't stop.





How alcohol may affect an infant

Alcohol can make infants fussy, less alert, and less interactive, disrupt sleep patterns, and cause abdominal bloating and vomiting. It also has negative effects on your infants' physical and brain development and can cause hormone-related growth problems.

It isn't safe to nurse your baby while you are taking alcohol with benzodiazepines, opioids or another downers.

Alcohol and lactation

Alcohol disrupts hormones that are important for lactation and milk letdown. After having 1-2 drinks, lactating parents produce $\frac{3}{4}$ as much milk as when they're sober. Avoid drinking alcohol until after your milk comes in, or if you have difficulties like a low milk supply and/or trouble with letdown.

Reducing your drinking

Do you drink more than one standard drink per day, binge drink (4+ drinks on an occasion), or just feel you should drink less than you do? Talk to your health care provider or call the [Washington Recovery Help Line](#) at 866-789-1511 for support or information about how to quit or reduce your use.

People use different terms to describe their body parts. Some transgender and non-binary birth parents use "chest" instead of "breasts." In this document, we use breastfeeding and chestfeeding as interchangeable terms. Lactation is a biological process where your body makes milk to feed babies.