

Medications for Opioid Use Disorder and Lactation



It is safe to nurse your baby while taking medications for opioid use disorder.

What are Medications for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD)?

Medications for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUDs) are prescribed medications that help people stop using opioids.

Methadone and buprenorphine (Subutex®) are the most effective medications for people trying to stop using opioids because they reduce withdrawal symptoms and opioid cravings. Methadone or buprenorphine are an essential part of treatment for an Opioid Use Disorder (OUD). They can help you and your baby to be healthy. Methadone and buprenorphine are safe to take while nursing. Buprenorphine-naloxone (Suboxone®) is also safe.

Naltrexone (Vivitrol®) is another medication that is used to treat opioid use disorder. It isn't as effective because it doesn't reduce withdrawal symptoms or cravings, but it is safe for chest/breastfeeding.

Can MOUDs enter human milk?

Yes. Small amounts of MOUDs get in your milk. The amount of methadone or buprenorphine your baby gets when nursing is very small. It's less than what your baby would be given if they had withdrawal symptoms after being born. Nursing while taking MOUDs is better for your baby than not nursing.

What effect does nursing while taking MOUDs have on your baby?

- Nursing while taking an MOUD is safe for you and your baby.
- Your baby cannot get addicted to MOUD's from nursing.
- Babies who are chest/breastfed are less likely to need medications for withdrawal after birth.
- If you take methadone, when you stop nursing it's best to stop chest/breastfeeding slowly. Very rarely, babies can have withdrawal symptoms if you stop nursing suddenly.
- If you take buprenorphine, naltrexone or buprenorphine-naloxone, you don't need to stop nursing slowly.

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.
- Avoid sleeping in the same bed as your baby. The safest sleep arrangement is to share the same room with your baby in their own crib.
- Store MOUDs securely. This is especially important if toddlers or other children are in the house.
 - **If you think your baby has swallowed MOUDs**, 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.



What if I'm told not to nurse because I take an MOUD?

A health care provider who says you shouldn't nurse your baby because you take an MOUD is misinformed. Ask your provider if there are other reasons they think you shouldn't chest/breastfeed. Deciding how to feed your infant is your decision. If you feel your care is disrespectful you can ask for a different provider or file a complaint with the clinic or hospital.

Nursing while taking methadone or buprenorphine is approved by the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Association of Women's Health, Obstetric, and Neonatal Nurses, the World Health Organization, and the Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine.

If I take MOUDs while I'm pregnant, will my baby have withdrawal symptoms after they're born?

If you take methadone or buprenorphine while you're pregnant, your baby might have withdrawal symptoms after they're born. Your baby will also need to stay in the hospital for a few extra days.

When you give birth, the best type of care for you and your baby is called Eat, Sleep and Console. This care includes:

- You and your baby staying in the same room together.
- Keeping the room quiet with the light dim.
- Swaddling and holding your baby.
- Nursing your baby or holding them skin-to-skin while they bottle feed.

Not all hospitals offer Eat, Sleep and Console. To find out if the hospital you're planning to deliver at offers Eat, Sleep and Console you can:

- Ask your prenatal care provider if the hospital you want to deliver at offers Eat, Sleep and Console.
- You can call the hospital's main phone number and ask the operator for the maternity department (this is sometimes called the 'postpartum', 'antepartum' or 'mother baby' floors/units). Any of the nurses working should know if they offer Eat, Sleep and Console.
- If you can, choose to deliver at a hospital that offers Eat, Sleep and Console. That is the best type of care for you and your baby.



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.