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Smoking and Breastfeeding

The information provided is taken from various reference sources. It is provided as a guideline. No responsibility can be taken by the author or the Breastfeeding Network for the way in which the information is used. Clinical decisions remain the responsibility of medical and breastfeeding practitioners. The data presented here is intended to provide some immediate information but cannot replace input from professionals and voluntary breastfeeding personnel.

Smoking whilst breastfeeding is not advised. However the benefits of breastfeeding and smoking are still greater than formula feeding. Smoking only after feeding and away from the baby is recommended to limit the baby's exposure.

- Nicotine is found in breastmilk.
- The flavour of breastmilk collected 30-60 minutes after smoking was identified as tasting more like cigarettes than samples taken at any other time.
- The levels of cotinine (the chemical into which nicotine is changed in the body) in the urine of breastfed babies whose mothers smoked were ten times higher than those of formula fed babies of smoking mothers. It appears that this is due to passage through breastmilk and not through exposure to smoke in a room.
- Babies of mothers who smoke are more likely to suffer from colic.
- Smoking appears to lower breastmilk production – more women who smoke believe that they have insufficient milk
- Mothers who smoke are likely to breastfeed for a shorter length of time
- Many women continue to smoke whilst breastfeeding perceiving that it is the only time that they have for themselves, to overcome tiredness or to reduce their appetite.
- Passive smoking is related to early onset of wheezing – breastfeeding may reduce the severity of bronchial asthma.
- Research shows exposure to smoke increases the risk of cot death in babies.

Mothers should be encouraged to stop smoking – or not to restart after pregnancy
The use of nicotine replacement therapy exposes the baby to less nicotine than smoking does for further information on Nicotine Replacement Therapy and Breastfeeding see information sheet which can be downloaded from
www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk/drugs-in-breastmilk-information-and-factsheets

To find your nearest Breastfeeding Supporter call the Supporterline 0300 100 0210

Calls to 0300 numbers cost no more than calls to UK numbers starting 01 and 02 and will be part of any inclusive minutes that apply to your provider and call package

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Registered office Alexander Sloan, Chartered Accountants, 38 Cadogan Street, Glasgow, G2 7HF
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