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Silicone Breast Implants and Breastfeeding

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Concerns are being raised by some mothers who have had Poly Implant Prothese (PIP) implants in their breasts and are now breastfeeding or pregnant and planning to breastfeedⁱ.

Although there have been no studies that we are aware of regarding the passage of this particular type of gel, in general the recommendation on silicone breast implants is;

“Silicone transfer to breastmilk has been studied in one group of 15 lactating mothers with bilateral silicone breast implants.ⁱⁱ Silicon levels were measured in breastmilk, whole blood, cow's milk, and 26 brands of infant formula. Comparing implanted women to controls, mean silicon levels were not significantly different in breastmilk (55.45 +/- 35 and 51.05 +/- 31 ng/mL respectively) or in blood (79.29 +/- 87 and 103.76 +/- 112 ng/mL respectively). Mean silicon level measured in store-bought cow's milk was 708.94 ng/mL and that for 26 brands of commercially available infant formula was 4402.5 ng/mL (ng/mL= parts per billion). The authors concluded that lactating women with silicone implants are similar to control women with respect to levels of silicon in their breastmilk and blood. From these studies, silicon levels are 10 times higher in cow's milk and even higher in infant formulas. It is not known for certain if ingestion of leaking silicone by a nursing infant is dangerous. Although one article has been published showing esophageal strictures, it has subsequently been recalled by the author.

Silicone by nature is extremely inert and is unlikely to be absorbed in the GI tract by a nursing infant although good studies are lacking. Silicone is a ubiquitous substance, found in all foods, liquids, etc.”ⁱⁱⁱ

For further information mothers should be advised to consult their GP and surgeon for individual discussion.

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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References

ⁱ www.nhs.uk/news/2012/01January/Pages/government-review-advises-on-french-pip-breast-implants.aspx

ⁱⁱ Semple JL, Lugowski SJ, Baines CJ, Smith DC, McHugh A. Breast milk contamination and silicone implants: preliminary results using silicon as a proxy measurement for silicone. *Plast Reconstr Surg* 1998; 102(2):528-533

ⁱⁱⁱ Hale T Medications in Mothers Milk Online version accessed January 2012