

When a breastfeeding mother is ill— breastfeeding can continue

You may be breastfeeding and become ill or need treatment. For most illness or treatments, breastfeeding can continue.

Why continue breastfeeding:

- * Breastfeeding can be restful and calming for both you and your baby.
- * Your body makes healing antibodies when you have an infection and your baby gets these antibodies in your breast milk.
- * Breastfeeding is less work than preparing formula, sitting up to feed and sterilising bottles. Your baby can lie beside you and feed as needed without you moving.
- * You and your baby stay together, so you know your baby is safe and happy.
- * Sudden weaning can lead to sore breasts and you may have a fever.
- * Your baby can feel sad and lonely if suddenly weaned, as well as at risk of illness and allergy from formula.
- * Your baby continues to receive the benefits of breastfeeding—healthy, best nutrition, good for growth and development, less risk of obesity and later health problems.

***Discuss with your doctor how your treatment can fit with breastfeeding.
Ask for a second opinion from another doctor if you want more information.***

Key questions about maternal medications or treatments and breastfeeding

- ◇ Is this medication or treatment necessary at this time, or could it wait until my baby is older?
- ◇ What will happen if I do not have this medication or treatment at this time?
- ◇ Is there evidence that this medication or treatment will harm my baby?
- ◇ What are the risks to my baby and to me from weaning and giving artificial milk?
- ◇ Is there an alternative treatment that would facilitate breastfeeding?
- ◇ Do the benefits of using this medication or treatment outweigh the risks to my baby from possible drug intake or from weaning?



If you need to go into hospital

Many hospitals will help you to continue breastfeeding if you need to be in hospital. Your baby may be able to stay with you or come to visit frequently. If your baby stays with you, you may need to have another adult to care for the baby if you are not able to lift and to change the baby. Usually it is easier to breastfeed than to express or pump your milk, however expressing your milk and sending it home to your baby is an option to think about if your baby is not with you.

Some questions to ask before you go into hospital:

- Are other treatments available that do not involve staying in hospital?
- Could the treatment be carried out as a day patient or out-patient?
- Is the treatment necessary at this time, or could it be delayed until the baby is older?
- Is early discharge with care at home possible?
- What are the hospital facilities for assisting breastfeeding?
- Would another hospital/doctor in the area be more supportive of continuing to breastfeed?

If your stay in hospital is sudden and unplanned, make sure the staff know that you are breastfeeding and that you want to continue breastfeeding. If the staff do not know that you are breastfeeding they cannot help you to continue.