

# Overview of Breastmilk Feeding Guidelines for Substance Use and How to Empower Patients to Make Informed Decisions about Breastmilk Feeding with Community-Based Lactation Support Services

---

Debra Bogen, MD, Director of the Allegheny County Health Department

# Overview

---

1. Discuss evidence-based breastmilk feeding guidelines for substance use
2. Best practices for how to empower patients to make informed decisions about breastmilk feeding
3. Best practices for connecting individuals to lactation support services in the community

## Breastfeeding Traffic Light

### Green Light

This substance may continue to be used by the breastfeeding mother. This mother may continue to breastfeed or provide expressed breast milk with her current diagnosis or condition.

Substance or Condition	Special Considerations
Acetaminophen + oxycodone (Percocet)	When the substance is prescribed. If NAS is observed in the infant, continue to encourage breastfeeding.
Buprenorphine (Subutex)	When the substance is prescribed as part of a treatment program. If NAS is observed in the infant, continue to encourage breastfeeding.
Buprenorphine + Naloxone (Suboxone)	When the substance is prescribed as part of a treatment program. If NAS is observed in the infant, continue to encourage breastfeeding.
Caffeine	Moderate intake. If the infant appears jittery or irritable, reducing caffeine consumption may be advised.
Lorazepam	When the substance is prescribed. If NAS is observed in the infant, continue to encourage breastfeeding.
Methadone	When the substance is prescribed as part of a treatment program. If NAS is observed in the infant, continue to encourage breastfeeding.
Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• citalopram (Celexa)</li> <li>• escitalopram (Lexapro),</li> <li>• fluoxetine (Prozac)</li> <li>• fluvoxamine (Luvox)</li> <li>• paroxetine (Paxil)</li> <li>• sertraline (Zoloft)</li> </ul>	Some SSRIs are preferred over others; however, <b>all SSRIs are considered compatible with breastfeeding</b> . Discussion regarding specific SSRIs can occur between the mother and her prescriber.  If NAS/toxicity is observed in the infant, continue to encourage breastfeeding.

# “Traffic Light” Guidance Tool

### Yellow Light

This substance may continue to be used by the breastfeeding mother **with caution, but it is recommended to reduce or eliminate use**. This mother may continue to breastfeed or feed expressed breast milk with the listed diagnosis or condition **under the specified conditions**.

Substance or Condition	Special Considerations
Cannabis	Data is insufficient to determine if maternal cannabis use is safe for the breastfeeding infant. At this time while the mother may continue to breastfeed, it is <b>strongly encouraged that she stops cannabis use</b> .
Hepatitis B	Breastfeeding should not be delayed for the infant to receive the Hep B immunization. In the case of an open wound on the nipple, the mother should temporarily suspend breastfeeding until the wound has healed while pumping to support her milk supply. Contact lactation services for a consultation.
Hepatitis C	In the case of an open wound on the nipple, the mother should temporarily suspend breastfeeding until the wound has healed while pumping to support her milk supply. Contact lactation services for a consultation.
Herpes, inactive or active with no lesions on the breast	When herpes is active with lesions present on the breast, breastfeeding should be suspended until the lesions have resolved. The mother should pump to support her milk supply. Contact lactation services for a consultation.
Nicotine	All mothers should be encouraged to reduce or eliminate nicotine use. Breastfeeding may continue while reducing or eliminating use of nicotine. Recommendations include smoking after, not before, feeding and smoking outside the infant’s home.

### Red Light

This substance is **contraindicated** during breastfeeding. This mother **may not** continue to breastfeed with the listed diagnosis or condition.

Substance or Condition	Special Considerations
Cocaine	Street drugs are contraindicated during breastfeeding. See lactation services for the Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine’s recommendations for mothers with cocaine substance use disorder.
Heroin	Street drugs are contraindicated during breastfeeding. Mothers who admit to heroin use during pregnancy should be encouraged to breastfeed during their hospital stay and enter a drug treatment program, but discontinue breastfeeding if they plan to continue heroin use.
HIV	At this time the CDC advises against breastfeeding for HIV+ mothers, even when being treated with anti-retroviral therapy.

\*\*This list is not meant to imply absolute safety of any medication while pregnant or breastfeeding\*\*  
Magland, Eliza RN, IBCLC; Migone, Celina MD; Lembeck, Amy DO

5/2019