Guidelines for the Prescribing of Medication during Lactation

Prescribing during Lactation

Literature on the use of drugs in breastfeeding is often over-cautious and there are no published controlled studies on the safety of psychotropic medication during breast feeding. Contraindication to breast feeding in the manufacturer’s data sheet is often based on lack of evidence rather than known adverse effects. As data is only available in case reports and case series, it is essential that women receive the best possible advice to assist them in making informed choices. Breastfeeding is considered one of the most important measures to improve child health in all societies and health professionals are ideally placed to actively promote and facilitate its practice.

General Principles

- Involve the breastfeeding mother fully in the decision making process
- Seek support and advice from Maternal Health Link Practitioner
- Obtain current specialist advice from UK Drugs in Lactation Advisory Service (UKDILAS)
- Assess the benefit/risk ratio for both mother and infant
- Avoid unnecessary drug use and limit use of over-the-counter (OTC) products
- Premature infants are at a greater risk from exposure to drugs
- Infants with renal, hepatic, cardiac or neurological impairment are at greater risk
- Monitor infants for specific adverse effects of drugs, feeding patterns, growth and development
- Provide feedback on outcome to UKDILAS
- Use only information sources recommended by Humber NHS Foundation Trust (HFT)
- Where possible continue the same medication given during pregnancy
- Use the lowest effective dose and avoid polypharmacy
- Avoid drugs with a long half-life
- Consider timing feeds to avoid peak drug levels in milk

Healthcare professionals should NEVER advise, unequivocally, that a medication is either harmful or safe during breastfeeding. Instead they should make enquiries using HFT approved sources of information in order to discuss risks and benefits with the patient on an individual basis.
Recommended Information Sources

- **UKDILAS- United Kingdom Drugs in Lactation Advisory Services**
  This service provides the most up to date resource, as it holds the national data base on the use of medication during breast feeding. They can be contacted directly by telephone on 0121 311 1974 or via the web at [http://tinyurl.com/qm4lxv](http://tinyurl.com/qm4lxv) or [http://www.ukmicentral.nhs.uk/drugpreg/guide.htm](http://www.ukmicentral.nhs.uk/drugpreg/guide.htm). The enquirer is responsible for involving all members of the health care team that provide care to an individual, to avoid the potential for conflicting advice.

- **Maudsley Prescribing Guidelines and Psychotropic Drug Directory**
  These publications are excellent resources regarding therapeutic considerations, the latest edition should always be used. Although summary of knowledge regarding specific drugs is given to date, this should not be used as a sole basis for decision making. Inclusion of information can be taken as a guide but absence of information does not imply anything about the status of a specific medication.

- **BNF**
  Appendix 5 of the most current edition of the British National Formulary gives basic advice on the risks of drug treatment in breast feeding. It must be noted that the absence of data in the tables does not imply safety.

- **SmPC-Summary of Product Characteristics**
  This is produced as part of the drug licensing application process. As there is no requirement under the licensing system to investigate drug excretion into breast milk, the information included is limited. Where included, information is often cautious and based on lack of investigation.

- **MIMS-Monthly Index of Medical Specialities**
  Contains no specific information regarding the use of medication in breastfeeding

- **Internet**
  Use of the internet as a source of information should be undertaken with extreme caution and restricted to validated sites. The up to date database from UKDILAS is available at [http://www.ukmicentral.nhs.uk/drugpreg/guide.htm](http://www.ukmicentral.nhs.uk/drugpreg/guide.htm) or [http://tinyurl.com/phk9yw](http://tinyurl.com/phk9yw)

- **Pharmacists**
  Where available Pharmacists are able to co-ordinate and advise accordingly, the HFT Pharmacy department can be contacted on 01482 301724

- **Maternal Health Link Practitioner**
  Within each team the allocated practitioner is available to advise and support the mother regarding decisions and practical support.
Prescribing during Lactation Flow Chart

Discuss risks of exposure to medication for breastfed infant

Decision made that medication is required

Is the infant
- full term?
- more than 2 weeks old?
- healthy & of normal weight?

NO

YES

Obtain specialist advice from UKDILAS
0121 311 1974

Is information available in latest editions of Maudsley Guidelines and Psychotropic Drug Directory?

NO

YES

Is the medication excreted into breast milk?

YES

Is agent associated with toxicity in infants?

NO

NO

Advise that risks to infant minimal

Considerations that can reduce risks
- Time feeds to avoid peak levels in milk
- Extent to which infant is feeding
- Replace some feeds with formula

Is the treatment required for short term or long term use?

SHORT TERM

LONG TERM

Advise nursing mother whether the information available is short term or long term

Most information is short term

Can milk be expressed and discarded as a short term measure?

Ensure the infant is monitored for adverse effects of medication as well as feeding patterns, growth & development. Consider reporting outcomes to UKDILAS