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# B A B Y C H I C K

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## Boozing and Breastfeeding



Pregnancy: it's a long, hard nine months (or more) without a glass of wine or a poolside mimosa in sight. Between the lack of good, restful sleep, and the giant swollen cankles — don't even get me started on the hormones — if ever there were a candidate in need of a cold, stiff drink it would be a pregnant lady. Especially in Texas, in the summertime heat. (Speaking from experience here!) Unfortunately, that's not how it works. Drinking while pregnant is generally considered a bad idea. And for good reason, all joking aside.

Now don't get me wrong, the end prize — an adorable little baby you get to keep forever and ever — is more than worth the forced detox. But holy moly, if you are anything like me, the first thing you craved after giving birth — after a giant nap and some sweet newborn snuggles of course — was a big plate of fajitas with all the fixings, and an even bigger margarita. (I think the phrase “as big as my face” literally came out of my mouth.)



But what if you are planning to breastfeed? Does this mean another six to 12 months or more of forced sobriety? Not necessarily. There has been a lot of misinformation over the years regarding alcohol and breastfeeding. Here's what the [LLLI, La Leche League International](#), has to say on the subject (from *The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding*).

*“The effects of alcohol on the breastfeeding baby are directly related to the amount the mother ingests. When the breastfeeding mother drinks occasionally or limits her consumption to one drink or less per day, the amount of alcohol her baby receives has not been proven to be harmful.”*





The takeaway? There's nothing wrong with breastfeeding in moderation. You just have to be careful about it. Here's a few things to keep in mind when indulging in a drink or two.

**It's important to remember that the same amount of alcohol that makes it into your bloodstream, makes it into your breastmilk.**

Researchers say that infants younger than three months process alcohol at about half the rate of adults. And studies show it can negatively affect baby's eating and sleeping habits. During the four hours after a breastfeeding mother consumes an alcoholic beverage, babies who nurse consume about 20% less milk. (from [whattoexpect.com](http://whattoexpect.com))

**And the old wives tale that drinking alcohol produces more milk? That's false.**

While prolactin (a hormone that helps with milk production) does increase with alcohol consumption, oxytocin (a hormone that's responsible for milk letdown) decreases.

According to the [American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Drugs](http://AmericanAcademyofPediatrics.org), if consumed in large amounts, listed side effects include: **drowsiness, deep sleep, weakness, abnormal weight gain in the infant, and the possibility of decreased milk ejection reflex in the mother.** Some studies show that alcohol in breastmilk may hinder baby's development — some experts recommend breastfeeding moms avoid drinking alcohol entirely until baby is at least three months old.

“Alcohol passes freely into mother’s milk and has been found to peak 30 to 60 minutes after consumption, 60 to 90 minutes when taken with food. Alcohol also freely passes out of a mother’s milk and her system. It takes a 120 pound woman about two to three hours to eliminate from her body the alcohol in one serving of beer or wine...the more alcohol that is consumed, the longer it takes for it to be eliminated. It takes up to 13 hours for a 120 pound woman to eliminate the alcohol from one high-alcohol drink.” (from [La Leche League’s The Breastfeeding Answer Book](#))

### **You should always wait at least two hours after finishing a drink before nursing your child.**

This should give your body time to (hopefully) clear the alcohol. Of course this varies from person to person. It’s probably best to have a drink (if you choose to imbibe) right after feeding, or during one of baby’s longer sleep stretches. Or [you can always pump](#) and [store your milk](#) before drinking, then feed your baby the expressed milk [from a bottle](#) (giving your body more time to completely clear the booze). You could also [feed your baby formula](#). Don’t forget to stay hydrated (with water we mean)! Eating before drinking will also help to absorb the alcohol.

If you do choose to pump and store your breastmilk to enjoy a glass or two of wine (or whatever adult beverage you prefer), we recommend using [Milkies Milk Trays](#). They are designed specifically for expressed milk.



[Milk Trays](#) are made from PET Plastic — this means they are made of a food-safe plastic that contains no BPA, phthalates, or dyes. [Milk Trays](#) allow you to freeze and store your milk in one ounce “Milk Sticks” that fit through any bottle opening. This allows you to thaw the perfect amount of milk for a feeding, so that you don’t waste a drop of your liquid gold. They are also reusable! Which is good for the environment, and your wallet. 😊 I LOVE my [Milkies Milk Trays](#). Way more user friendly than plastic bags (you don’t have to worry about leakage), and much safer than a regular ice tray (most of these are not BPA free — you don’t want to leach chemicals into baby’s milk.)





## Having more than one drink at a time can prove challenging for a breastfeeding mom.

It can be difficult to determine when your body has cleared the booze — the more you drink, the longer it takes. Your best bet? Limit yourself to one alcoholic drink per day. And if you have too much to drink and become intoxicated, DO NOT breastfeed your baby until you are sober. If you have to, pump and dump the expressed milk. Liquid gold? Not if it's tainted. Not worth the risk. Trust us on this one. Remember, you can't safely care for your baby if you're drunk. (Duh.) And co-sleeping after drinking probably isn't a good idea. And definitely is not if you are feeling tipsy or drunk. If you're going to drink, keep baby out of your bed. It's just that simple.

Motherhood is hard. We all deserve a break every now and then. We just have to be careful and thoughtful about our actions. Parenting is a full-time job. Turn your back for just one second, and disaster can strike. It's best not to even put ourselves in a position that could cause harm. Am I right? So here's to babies, breastfeeding, and (safely) celebrating all of life's *momentous* occasions!

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### Jessica

Jessica Tomes is a wife, a small business owner, mommy to three precious little girls, and a **Blogger Chick** here at **Baby Chick**. She happily lives in beautiful Houston, Texas, and also sells real estate! Keep up with her and the rest of our bloggers here on our [website](#).

