

Contrast Agents and Breast Milk

What you need to know

This handout explains what a contrast agent is, the amount of contrast that passes into breastmilk, potential risks, and recommendations if you are lactating (producing milk from your breasts) and will be receiving contrast.



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What is a contrast agent?

A *contrast agent* is a special dye used during imaging tests to make certain parts of your body show up more clearly. Iodine, gadolinium, and barium are all types of contrast agents. They can be given by mouth (a drink), intravenously (into your vein), or rectally (by enema).

Will contrast agents go into breast milk?

Iodine contrast

Iodine contrast is used in CT scans. When iodine contrast is given intravenously (IV), orally, or rectally, the amount that may be in breast milk is incredibly low. If your baby is drinking breast milk, they may get a small amount of iodine. This could possibly cause an allergic reaction – but no cases of this have been reported after having iodine contrast.

Gadolinium contrast

Gadolinium contrast is used in MRI scans. The amount of gadolinium passed to breast milk is even lower than iodine contrast. If your baby is drinking breast milk, they may get a small amount of gadolinium. This could possibly cause an allergic reaction – but no cases of this have been reported after having gadolinium contrast.

Barium contrast

Barium contrast does **not** go into breast milk.

What are the possible risks?

The risks of a baby having any harmful effects or allergic reactions from breast milk with tiny amounts of iodine or gadolinium contrast is very low. No cases of harm or reaction have been reported. The only change might be in how the milk tastes.



Talk with your care team if you have any questions about feeding your baby after your procedure.

Recommendations

Research suggests that it is safe to continue using your breast milk if you have received an iodine, gadolinium, or barium contrast agent. However, we know this is a very personal decision. If you decide not to use your breast milk, some options include:

- Stop using your breast milk for up to 24 hours after receiving contrast.
- Pump and throw away breast milk (“pump and dump”) from both breasts for up to 24 hours after receiving contrast.
- Start using your breast milk again after 24 hours.

If you have any questions or concerns, please talk with your provider.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

UWMC - Montlake Imaging Services: 206.598.6200

UW Roosevelt Radiology: 206.598.6868

Harborview Imaging Services: 206.744.3105

UWMC - Northwest Imaging Services CT: 206.668.2061

References:

American College of Radiology Manual on Contrast Media on May 20th, 2024
www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK501443/ on May 20th, 2024

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