

Radiologic Procedures and Breastfeeding

Is gadopentetate, the contrast media used in MRI scans, safe?

Yes! Although breastfeeding mothers may be told to “dump and dump” their breast milk for some length of time according to the protocols of a radiology department, this is not necessary. Gadopentetate is excreted into breast milk in extremely small amounts. Less than 0.04% of the dose given to a mother will get into her milk, and only 0.8% of THAT amount will be absorbed by her baby.

What about CT scans?

The contrast media in a CT scan is an iodinated compound that is bonded to a carrier molecule. It does not enter the milk in a significant amount. Similar iodinated compounds are used for other radiologic procedures and are not harmful.

Statement from the American College of Radiology:

In 2020, the American College of Radiology’s Committee on Drugs and Contrast Media made the following statement about the contrast agents used in MRI or CT scans:

“Because of the very small percentage of iodinated contrast medium that is excreted into the breast milk and absorbed by the infant’s gut, we believe that the available data suggest that it is safe for a mother and infant to continue breastfeeding after receiving such an agent.”

Unfortunately, despite no scientific evidence, the committee added the following sentence: *“If the mother so desires, she may abstain from breastfeeding for 24 hours with active expression and discarding of breast milk from both breasts during that period.”*

While an informed decision to temporarily stop breastfeeding should be left up to a mother after these facts are communicated, many radiology departments have not changed their “protocols” and continue to suggest interruption of breastfeeding for 24 hours.

Are there ANY substances used in radiology that require pumping and discarding milk?

Yes, but they are MUCH less common than iodinated compounds and gadopentetate. Any time a mother is given a RADIOACTIVE substance, she must pump and discard her milk until the radioactivity has dissipated. The length of time it takes depends on the amount given and the type of substance. If you are to receive a radioactive substance, please find out the name of the substance and the amount you will receive. We can inform you of the length of time “pumping and dumping” is recommended.

Additional information on radiologic contrast substances provided by the National Institute of Health <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK501922/toxnet.nlm.nih.gov> may be found on LACTMED.

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