



TEN STEP TUESDAY

Booze and Breastfeeding

It's Ten Step Tuesday!

This week features an article by [Liz Brooks, JD, IBCLC, FILCA](#) a lactation consultant, lawyer, speaker and author of the book *Legal & Ethical Issues for the IBCLC*. Her blog and social media feed provide practical guidance for IBCLCs and others supporting breastfeeding families.

Booze & Breastfeeding

As the holidays approach we will get a surge of questions from lactating parents about how long they have to pump and dump ... or whether they should buy those pricey strips that test alcohol content in human milk.

My reply? “Boy, marketing sure works doesn't it? You don't need test strips for your milk, after you've had a few drinks, any more than you need test strips of your own blood to know if you're too drunk to nurse. Your milk is a filter for the booze. My advice: take the test strip money and buy a lovely bottle of

champagne. Be sensible. All things in moderation. No one in the house gets to be drunk anymore, and it has nothing to do with lactation, and everything to do with parenting.”



There is a difference, of course, between blood alcohol content (what the drinking parent feels) and alcohol content in MILK that must then go through the “filtering and diluting” process of being ingested before it is absorbed in the baby's own body/bloodstream. [Lactmed's page](#) on alcohol is informative, including these quotes with my bracketed commentary:

- “A computer simulation of breastfed infant serum alcohol levels after maternal ingestion of 250 mL of wine [8.5 ounces ... or 1/3 of a bottle of wine] estimated resulting blood alcohol concentrations of 0.0033% in newborn infants and 0.0038% in 3-month-old infants.”
- “Another group estimated that if a woman ingested 4 standard drinks at once and breastfed her infant, the infant would attain a blood alcohol concentration of 0.0049%.”

Bear in mind: The federal limit to legally drive in the United States is a blood alcohol content of 0.08% Note how many zeros come *after* the decimal point, to gauge the amounts that babies are feeling. It is WAY below legal definitions for DUI.

The cited study for the second comment, above, also has this statement: “The amount of alcohol presented to nursing infants through breast milk is approximately 5-6% of the weight-adjusted maternal dose, and even in a theoretical case of binge drinking, the children would not be subjected to clinically relevant amounts of alcohol.”

So special recommendations aimed at lactating women are not warranted. Instead, lactating women should simply follow standard recommendations on alcohol consumption.

References:

Alcohol and Breastfeeding - Haastруп - 2014 - Basic & Clinical Pharmacology & Toxicology - Wiley Online Library
Lactation and Booze DO Mix | Liz Brooks, IBCLC (lizbrooksibclc.com)

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