

Breastfeeding and Medication



Fexofenadine and Breastfeeding

Fexofenadine can be used as an antihistamine during lactation if other antihistamines e.g., cetirizine and loratadine are not effective although studies are limited

Introduction

Fexofenadine is an antihistamine used to treat allergies including hay fever. It is available to buy over the counter in the brand name Allegra™. It may also be prescribed (Telfast™). It is also used for children over the age of 6 years (30mg twice daily). The normal dose for an adult is 120mg daily. It is a metabolite of a drug Terfenadine which was used in the past (Triludan™) t withdrawn due to the risk of cardiac arrhythmia caused by QT prolongation. The active metabolite is not cardiotoxic (*Fexofenadine: new preparation. Terfenadine, without cardiotoxicity. Prescribe Int. 1999 Feb;8(39):11-3. PMID: 10557567.* <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/10557567/>)

Efficacy

In seasonal allergic rhinitis the above comparative trial showed that the effect of fexofenadine (120 mg/day in a single intake) was moderate and not different from that of cetirizine. Side effects not in the BNF include Dizziness; drowsiness; headache; nausea. However, in general it seems to be well tolerated and sedation is minimal because it does not cross the blood brain barrier.

Compatibility with breastfeeding

Because of its lack of sedation and low milk levels, maternal use of fexofenadine would not be expected to cause any adverse effects in breastfed infants (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK500677/>) . Although not known to be harmful,

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most manufacturers advise avoiding their use in mothers who are breast-feeding (<https://bnf.nice.org.uk/drugs/fexofenadine-hydrochloride/>). This the patient information leaflet may say that it should not be used during breastfeeding (see <https://www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk/dibm-pil/> for explanation.

Pharmacokinetics of fexofenadine

Milk plasma ratio 0.21: half life 14.4 hours: Relative infant dose 0.5% - 0.7% (Hale)

References

- Hale TW Medications and Mother's Milk (online access)
- LactMed
- E lactancia <https://www.e-lactancia.org/breastfeeding/fexofenadine-hydrochloride/product/>
- SPS Selecting and using antihistamines during breastfeeding Jan 22 <https://www.sps.nhs.uk/articles/selecting-and-using-antihistamines-during-breastfeeding/#:~:text=fexofenadine>
- Jones W Breastfeeding and Medication Routledge 2018

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