

# 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 It is a metabolite of a drug Terfenadine which was used in the past (Triludan™) t withdrawn due to the risk of cardiac arrhythmia caused by QT prolongation.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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