

Breastfeeding and Contrast Media

Computed Tomography (CT) or Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) studies requiring contrast are occasionally necessary in patients who are breastfeeding. It is very common for breastfeeding mothers to have concerns regarding the safety of the contrast media that is excreted into the breast milk.

What Is a Contrast Media?

Some patients undergoing either a CT or MRI examination will require an injection of contrast, or “dye” in order to enhance the appearance of their organs and tissues. In CT, we use a type of contrast that is iodine-based, while in MRI the type of contrast used is gadolinium-based.

Is It Safe to Breastfeed My Baby Following an Injection of Contrast?

There is very limited literature on the excretion of contrast agents into breast milk; however, several studies have shown the expected amount of contrast absorbed by an infant from ingested breast milk is extremely low. Although potential risks such as allergic reaction or toxicity are theoretical concerns, they have not been reported.

According to the American College of Radiology (ACR) Manual on Contrast Media, the likelihood of either direct toxic or allergic-like reactions resulting from ingested contrast media in the infant is extremely low, and makes the following recommendation:

“Because of the very small percentage of 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 the mother and infant to continue breastfeeding after receiving such an agent.”

What Should I Do If I Decide to Temporarily Stop Breastfeeding?

Ultimately, an informed decision to temporarily stop breastfeeding is up to you. If you are concerned, you may abstain from breastfeeding from the time of contrast administration for a period of 12 to 24 hours. There is no need to stop breastfeeding beyond that, due to the fact that any trace amounts of contrast are completely cleared from the bloodstream within 24 hours.

Where Can I Get More Information?

The American College of Radiology: acr.org/Quality-Safety/Resources/Contrast-Manual