

## Medicines Management & Pharmacy Services (MMPS)

# Psychotropic drug use in breast feeding

### Principles for prescribing psychotropics during breast-feeding

- (1) The benefits of breast-feeding to the mother and infant must be weighed against the risk of drug exposure in the infant
- (2) Infants should be monitored for any adverse effects of the drug as well as general development.
- (3) Use the lowest effective dose.
- (4) Avoid polypharmacy.
- (5) Feeds should if possible be timed to avoid peak drug levels in the milk or express milk to give later.

There is only a small amount of data on drugs in breast-feeding composed of case reports and small studies.

### Recommended drugs:

#### Antipsychotics

Olanzapine – most experience with this of the second generation antipsychotics

excreted in breast milk

estimates of infant serum levels range from low to undetectable

Sulpiride – amounts excreted in breast milk are low

a number of small studies have shown lactation to be improved in nursing mothers taking sulpiride

#### Antidepressants

Sertraline – excreted in breast milk but serum levels are low (NICE)

Imipramine and Nortriptyline – relatively low levels in breast milk (NICE)

#### Mood stabilisers

Olanzapine – see above

Valproate – excreted into breast milk – average level found is 1%

monitor infant for any signs of hepatotoxicity

mother must use adequate contraception (not recommended in women of child bearing age because of teratogenicity).

For further information on psychotropic drug use in breast feeding, see the NICE document [Antenatal and postnatal mental health Guidance CG45](#)

[Leeds and York Partnership NHS Foundation Trust: Choice and Medication](#)

Specialist information is available from the LYPFT pharmacy information helpline:

0113 3056319 (9am – 5pm, Monday – Friday)

or email: [pharmacyleedspft.lypft@nhs.net](mailto:pharmacyleedspft.lypft@nhs.net)

## References

- (1) Maudsley Prescribing Guidelines; 11<sup>th</sup> edition; 2012
- (2) Schaefer C; Drugs during pregnancy and lactation; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition; 2007

For further information: [www.choiceandmedication.org/leedsandyorkpft](http://www.choiceandmedication.org/leedsandyorkpft)

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## Provenance

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This information has been prepared by Leeds and York Partnership NHS Foundation Trust Medicines Management and Pharmacy Services