

Breastfeeding and Medication



Breastfeeding and norethisterone

Norethisterone 5mg tablets (Primolut N®, Utovlan®) is often prescribed to delay periods. This might be requested by the breastfeeding mother for example before a holiday or a wedding. There is little information from the research databases to support the use at this dose in breastfeeding. The only references are significantly lower doses (350mcg daily) used in progesterone only contraceptives.

It is suggested in the literature that this dose of norethisterone may reduce the quantity of breastmilk. In my experience a few mothers have noticed a temporary dip in supply but with holidays and weddings a change of routine could account for such a change. There seems to be no risk to the breastfeeding baby of a short course of medication at this dose.

Studies suggest that lower doses do not affect the composition of milk (reported in LACTMed <https://toxnet.nlm.nih.gov/cgi-bin/sis/htmlgen?LACTMED>)

BNF : Postponement of menstruation 5mg norethisterone 3 times daily starting 3 days before expected onset (menstruation occurs 2–3 days after stopping)

N.B This information is based on anecdote and not research based studies

The information on this sheet is based upon my professional experience as a pharmacist with a specialised interest in the safety of drugs in breastmilk, supported by evidence from expert sources. However, I cannot take responsibility for the prescription of medication which remains with the healthcare professionals involved. I am happy to discuss the evidence by email wendy@breastfeeding-and-medication.co.uk

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