



**Northwestern
Health Unit**

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Health Care Provider Advisory: Breastfeeding and Methadone

Northwestern Ontario has one of the highest rates of opioid use during pregnancy in the province. Last year 13.7% of mothers in our region used substances, including Opioid Maintenance Treatment (OMT) during pregnancy. The true rate is likely even higher due to stigma and self-reporting bias.

Breastfeeding while on OMT is safe. Please continue to educate and promote breastfeeding among these women early on in pregnancy.

For prenatal and postnatal patients who are on OMT, please note:

- **Breastfeeding while on OMT is safe.**
- Women on methadone treatment with no other contraindications should be encouraged to breastfeed. Please begin this conversation early on in pregnancy.
- Methadone is excreted in breastmilk in low amounts, on average 1-3% of the mother's weight-adjusted dose, which is smaller than the amounts that babies with Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome receive for pharmacological treatment.

Additional Resources

For more information on methadone composition in breastmilk please visit:

https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK501233/pdf/Bookshelf_NBK501233.pdf

For more information regarding practice recommendations when caring for pregnant/lactating women on methadone, please visit:

- The Canadian Paediatric Society (<https://www.cps.ca/en/documents/position/opioids-during-pregnancy>)
- The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada, SOGC Clinical Practice Guideline No. 349: Substance Use in Pregnancy ([https://www.jogc.com/article/S1701-2163\(17\)30470-X/pdf](https://www.jogc.com/article/S1701-2163(17)30470-X/pdf))
- Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse, Licit and Illicit Drug Use during Pregnancy: Maternal, Neonatal and Early Childhood Consequences, pg. 81-83 (<https://www.ccsa.ca/sites/default/files/2019-04/CCSA-Drug-Use-during-Pregnancy-Report-2013-en.pdf>)
- Best Start, Prescription Opioid Use, pg. 18-19. (<https://resources.beststart.org/product/a33e-prescription-opioid-use-guide/>)

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