

## **Dihydrocodeine and breastfeeding**

### **Who is this leaflet for?**

The leaflet is intended for mothers who are breastfeeding and who are being discharged with dihydrocodeine as additional pain relief.

### **What is dihydrocodeine?**

Dihydrocodeine is part of a group of drugs called opioid analgesics. It is used to treat mild to moderate pain, and is often used after childbirth when paracetamol and ibuprofen do not control pain adequately.

### **Does it cross into the breast milk?**

Dihydrocodeine and its metabolites (the chemicals that dihydrocodeine is broken down to by the liver) can be found in breast milk in small amounts. This can sometimes cause side effects in the baby.

### **What are the possible side effects?**

- Breathing problems
- Lethargy (drowsy and unenergetic)
- Poor feeding
- Drowsiness
- Bradycardia (slow heart rate).

If your baby develops any of these side effects, you should stop taking the medication and seek medical advice (either your local GP, community midwife or the midwifery team at the hospital).

### **How can I protect my baby?**

Dihydrocodeine should be used at the lowest dose that effectively takes away your pain. It should only be used for the shortest possible duration.

## **Are there any alternatives?**

There may be alternatives, at least while you are in hospital, so ask your midwife/doctor. Ideally, you should be able to rely on the paracetamol and ibuprofen you may have been prescribed. Remember that breastfeeding is very valuable and important for the health of you and your baby, and it is much easier to feed if you are comfortable and pain-free so please do not be afraid to take the pain relief that you need.

## **Contact us**

For further information, please phone either the:

- Medicines Helpline - 01872 252587 (Mondays to Fridays 9pm-5pm), or
- Hospital midwifery team on Wheal Fortune postnatal ward - 01872 252159

If you would like this leaflet in large print, braille, audio version or in another language, please contact the General Office on 01872 252690