Measles vaccination and breastfeeding

The information provided is taken from various reference sources. It is provided as a guideline. No responsibility can be taken by the author or the Breastfeeding Network for the way in which the information is used. Clinical decisions remain the responsibility of medical and breastfeeding practitioners. The data presented here is intended to provide some immediate information but cannot replace input from professionals.

In light of the ongoing problem with a measles outbreak in the UK, particularly in South Wales some mothers who did not have their vaccinations as children may now be looking at protecting themselves and hence their babies who are too young to be vaccinated. Breast-feeding is not a contraindication to MMR immunisation (1,2,3,4).

MMR vaccine can be given to breastfeeding mothers. Very occasionally, rubella vaccine virus has been found in breast milk, but this has not caused any symptoms in the baby (5,6,7). The vaccine does not work when taken orally (2,3). There is no evidence of mumps and measles vaccine viruses being found in breast milk.

Babies receive passive protection against measles, mumps, and rubella in the form of antibodies from their mothers. These antibodies can destroy the vaccine virus if they are present when the vaccine is given and, thus, can cause the vaccine to be ineffective. By 12 months of age, almost all infants have lost this passive protection (8), hence the first vaccination is usually given at 13 months (1).

References
2. Hale T. Medications in Mothers Milk 2014 (16th Ed)

To find your nearest Breastfeeding Supporter call the Supporterline 0300 100 0210

Calls to 0300 numbers cost no more than calls to UK numbers starting 01 and 02 and will be part of any inclusive minutes that apply to your provider and call package

©Wendy Jones PhD, MRPharmS and the Breastfeeding Network October 2014