

# Domperidone - use for increasing milk supply

Domperidone is a medication usually used for the treatment of nausea and vomiting. One side effect of this medication is it increases the level of the hormone prolactin that stimulates the production of breast milk. It is therefore termed a galactagogue (milk stimulant) and can be used for mothers who are expressing milk for their babies, or for breastfeeding mothers to increase their milk supply. Domperidone is not registered for use as a galactagogue in New Zealand, therefore should only be recommended for use when breast milk supply is low, and extra breastfeeding or expressing methods are not enough to increase milk supply. It is important that before taking this medication that you let your midwife, neonatal staff, lactation consultant or health professional know if your supply is low. They will help assess your lactation or breastfeeding and develop a plan of care to help increase your milk supply.

If your baby is in NICU, it is common to notice a decrease in milk supply around 4-6 weeks. Use of domperidone can sometimes return the volume to previous levels, provided a regular expressing regime continues.

## **Before considering taking domperidone, ensure you are:**

- Expressing or breastfeeding regularly – at least 3 hourly during the day and 4 hourly at night
- Make sure you are adequately emptying your breasts

- Using the correct hand expressing technique and/or have use of an electric breast pump. Ensure the breastshields are the correct size (if you are expressing regularly, you may need to increase the size)
- Having the opportunity for frequent skin-to-skin cuddles with your baby
- Eating a well-balanced diet and drinking plenty of fluid, and resting when you can
- Note that domperidone is rarely prescribed before seven days following birth

## **Precautions, interactions and adverse effects**

Your health professional can discuss the risks and benefits of using domperidone as a galactagogue to ensure that you are able to make an informed decision. Use of domperidone should be overseen by a medical professional.

The doctor prescribing domperidone should have knowledge of your medical history. Please notify them if you have any known cardiac condition such as an irregular heart rhythm (arrhythmia) or have a family history of this, or you are taking any medications for your heart.

It is important that they know exactly what other medication you may be taking (including herbal preparations), as there are certain antibiotics, antifungal drugs and antidepressants that can interact adversely with domperidone. You need to notify your doctor if you commence a new

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medication after commencing a course of domperidone.

While the amount ingested by an infant is reported as being very low, it is important that the doctor prescribing domperidone knows if your baby has a heart condition.

## Side effects

Whilst side effects from domperidone are very rare, it is important that you contact your doctor straight away if you have any of the following side effects:

- Fast or irregular heartbeat
- Fainting

Potential side effects include:

- Dry mouth
- Headaches (which usually disappear when domperidone is stopped)
- Abdominal cramps
- Diarrhoea
- Alteration of menstrual periods
- Anxiety or sleeplessness

Please notify your health professional if you experience any side effects.

## Dose

Your doctor will give you a prescription for an initial course, and this is commonly 10mg (one tablet) three times a day. It may take three to four days before you notice an effect on your milk supply. Domperidone may need to be continued for longer than two weeks, however this will need to be discussed with your doctor. There is evidence that once there is sufficient milk, it can be maintained without use of domperidone. Long

term use in breastfeeding mothers has not been studied.

The dose of domperidone should not exceed three tablets (30 mg) in one day.

## Discontinuing Domperidone

If you have been on domperidone for longer than two weeks, reduce your dose by one tablet (10mg) for a week, and then by a further one tablet (10mg) the following week, before stopping the medicine altogether. If your supply drops over this time, consult with your health professional about ongoing management.

Please note that this brochure does not contain all the information about domperidone. If you have any further questions or concerns, please ask your health professional, or a pharmacist.