# Three tips for safe feeding this festive season

Are you breastfeeding? Did you know that if alcohol is in your bloodstream, it’s also in your breastmilk – and at the same concentration? Or that just one standard drink remains in your breastmilk for an average of two hours?

With the festive season well and truly here, our calendars are packed with work parties, catch-ups with friends and family, and maybe even travel. For some people, alcohol may be part of these plans.

If you’re breastfeeding and choose to drink alcohol, you may be wondering about the safest options for you and your baby.

There are mixed messages out there about how to ensure your breastmilk is alcohol-free – something the [Every Moment Matters campaign](https://everymomentmatters.org.au/alcohol-and-pregnancy/breastfeeding/) is clearing up.

The [National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC)'s Australian Guidelines to Reduce Health Risks from Drinking Alcohol](https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/health-advice/alcohol) are that, when breastfeeding, not drinking alcohol is safest for the health of your baby.

If you choose to drink, there are simple strategies you can use to ensure the milk your baby drinks is alcohol-free:

1. Wait at least two hours per [standard drink](https://fare.org.au/resources/tips-and-tools/#:~:text=A%20standard%20drink%20contains%2010,nip%20(30ml)%20of%20spirits.) before feeding your baby to ensure your milk is alcohol-free.
2. Use a tool like the [Feed Safe app](https://feedsafe.net/), which uses your weight and height to calculate when your breastmilk is alcohol-free.
3. Express breastmilk **before** you drink alcohol so you or someone else can feed this milk to your baby.

It’s important to feed you baby breastmilk that is alcohol-free because their brain continues to develop well after birth, and is more vulnerable to alcohol than an adult’s brain.

Even small amounts of alcohol in breastmilk can disrupt baby’s sleep and affect the supply and flow of milk, and has been linked to problems with infant growth, motor development, verbal IQ, and cognitive ability in early childhood.

Put simply, if there’s alcohol in your blood it’s also in your breastmilk. Time is the only way to eliminate it, taking the body an average of two hours to process a standard drink.

Expressing milk and discarding it afterwards – sometimes known as ‘pumping and dumping’ – doesn’t remove alcohol from breastmilk because it remains in the bloodstream.

Understanding the risks and following these strategies will go a long way towards safe breastfeeding throughout the festive season, for you and for bub.

Hear more from Dr Sarah Bombell, GP Obstetrician and Lactation Consultant, on breastfeeding and alcohol:

https://youtu.be/UPCDy7b4lWI

Find out more pregnancy, breastfeeding and alcohol at [www.everymomentmatters.org.au](http://www.everymomentmatters.org.au/).