



ADR

Tip of the Month

Codeine and breast milk transmission

Although products containing codeine have been used for many years, their safety has recently been questioned in the context of a fatal adverse reaction in a breastfed infant (1).

To exert analgesic effects, codeine is metabolized to morphine. Certain ethnic groups are at higher risks of being ultra-rapid metabolizers and having higher-than-expected morphine levels in breastmilk (2).

Physicians should:

- Use the lowest effective codeine dose, for the shortest period of time, if treatment is deemed necessary.
- Alert parents to monitor infants carefully for sedation and seek immediate medical attention if concerned.
- Be aware that no test is currently available for general use in Canada to identify ultra-rapid metabolizers of codeine.

References

1. www.motherisk.org/prof/commonDetail.jsp?content_id=839
2. www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ahc-asc/media/advisories-avis/_2008/2008_164-eng.php

Please report all serious adverse drug reactions (ADRs).