

**NOTE: this document is outdated; see the revised information on the Peri-Pregnancy Chart Extras - Contraception (page 3) at the below link:**  
<http://www.rxfiles.ca/rxfiles/uploads/documents/members/CHT-Peri-Pregnancy-DrugTx.pdf>

### **How soon can oral contraceptives be used post-partum?** *Draft*

When considering the use of contraceptives immediately post-partum, two factors must be considered...the risk of clotting and the impact on milk production. Since women in the post-partum period are at increased risk of thrombosis, combined oral contraceptives should generally be avoided for **at least 3 weeks** after delivery.<sup>1</sup> Because of their lack of estrogen, the progestin-only products (*Micronor*® minipill *or Depo-Provera*® injection) are considered safer and are preferred in these women.<sup>2</sup> Estrogen can also inhibit the action of prolactin in mammary receptors resulting in decreased milk production and protein content. For this reason, combination oral contraceptives (COCs) are not recommended for breastfeeding mothers till the milk supply is well established (**6-8 weeks** post-partum).<sup>1,2</sup>

Some clinicians still caution against their use because of the infant's exposure to hormones. While there are some reports in the literature of vaginal bleeding, gynecomastia, and jaundice in infants nursed by mothers taking high dose COCs (i.e. 50+ ug estradiol), these findings have not been corroborated in women on low-dose COCs (≤35ug estradiol). Since the amount of estrogen the infant would be exposed to is minimal and the progestin is usually immeasurable and easily metabolized, the American Academy of Pediatrics considers COCs to be compatible with breastfeeding.<sup>3</sup> Progestin-only products may be preferred as they do not appear to adversely affect milk production and can be used immediately post-partum.<sup>2</sup>

**Thanks for the Question!**

<sup>1</sup> Bucci K and Carson D. "Contraception" in Pharmacotherapy 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. Appleton and Lange. Stanford, CT, 1997 (p.1614)

<sup>2</sup> Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada (**SOGC**). The Canadian Consensus Conference on Contraception. J Soc Obstet Gynaecol Can 1998;20(5):482-89, (6):571-98, (7):667-92.

<sup>3</sup> Ruggiero R. "Contraception" in Applied Therapeutics, 6th ed. Vancouver, WA, 1995 (p.43-9)