



Blessed Thistle

Revised: May 1, 2019.

Drug Levels and Effects

Summary of Use during Lactation

Blessed thistle (*Cardui benedicti*) contains sesquiterpene lactones, triterpenoids, lignans, tannins, essential oils, flavonoids, and polyenes. Blessed thistle is a purported galactagogue,[1][2][3][4][5][6] and is included in some proprietary mixtures promoted to increase milk supply; however, no scientifically valid clinical trials support this use. Galactagogues should never replace evaluation and counseling on modifiable factors that affect milk production.[7] Blessed thistle is "generally recognized as safe" (GRAS) as a flavoring in alcoholic beverages (e.g., Benedictine) by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Because it is a member of the ragweed family, allergy is a concern and high doses reportedly cause nausea and vomiting. Elevated liver enzymes occurred in a woman taking Mother's Milk Tea, which contains blessed thistle.[8]

Dietary supplements do not require extensive pre-marketing approval from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Manufacturers are responsible to ensure the safety, but do not need to *prove* the safety and effectiveness of dietary supplements before they are marketed. Dietary supplements may contain multiple ingredients, and differences are often found between labeled and actual ingredients or their amounts. A manufacturer may contract with an independent organization to verify the quality of a product or its ingredients, but that does *not* certify the safety or effectiveness of a product. Because of the above issues, clinical testing results on one product may not be applicable to other products. More detailed information [about dietary supplements](#) is available elsewhere on the LactMed Web site.

Drug Levels

Maternal Levels. Relevant published information was not found as of the revision date.

Infant Levels. Relevant published information was not found as of the revision date.

Effects in Breastfed Infants

A small manufacturer-sponsored, double-blind, randomized study compared Mother's Milk tea (Traditional Medicinals, Sebastopol, CA) to lemon verbena tea in exclusively breastfeeding mothers with milk insufficiency. Each Mother's Milk tea bag contained 35 mg of blessed thistle herb as well as several other herbs. Mothers were instructed to drink 3 to 5 cups of tea daily. No differences were seen between groups in infant digestive,

respiratory, dermatological, and other maternal-reported adverse events. No differences were seen in the growth parameters of the breastfed infants between the two groups.[9]

Effects on Lactation and Breastmilk

Relevant published information was not found as of the revision date.

References

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5. Dennehy C, Tsourounis C, Bui L, King TL. The use of herbs by California midwives. *J Obstet Gynecol Neonatal Nurs*. 2010;39:684-93. PubMed PMID: 21044150.
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7. Brodribb W. ABM Clinical Protocol #9: Use of galactagogues in initiating or augmenting maternal milk production, second revision 2018. *Breastfeed Med*. 2018;13:307-14. PubMed PMID: 29902083.
8. Silverman AL, Kumar A, Borum ML . Re: "Herbal use during breastfeeding" by Anderson (*Breastfeed Med* 2017;12(9):507-509). *Breastfeed Med*. 2018;13:301. PubMed PMID: 29757695.
9. Wagner CL, Boan AD, Marzolf A et al. The safety of Mother's Milk(R) Tea: Results of a randomized double-blind, controlled study in fully breastfeeding mothers and their infants. *J Hum Lact*. 2019;35:248-60. PubMed PMID: 30005170.

Substance Identification

Substance Name

Blessed Thistle

Scientific Name

Cardui benedicti

Drug Class

Breast Feeding

Lactation

Complementary Therapies

Galactagogues

Phytotherapy

Plants, Medicinal