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Barley

Revised: December 3, 2018.

Drug Levels and Effects

Summary of Use during Lactation

Barley (Hordeum vulgare) contains starch, dietary fiber such as beta-glucan, and the enzyme diastase. Barley is a purported galactogogue and is used by mothers in many cultures to increase their milk supply.[1][2][3][4] Some animal evidence indicates that a polysaccharide in barley can increase serum prolactin.[5][6][7] Galactogogues should never replace evaluation and counseling on modifiable factors that affect milk production.[8] No data exist on the excretion of any components of barley into breastmilk or on the safety and efficacy of barley in nursing mothers or infants. Barley is safe to be consumed during breastfeeding, except by persons with celiac disease. Allergy to barley occurs rarely.

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

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

Effects on Lactation and Breastmilk

Studies in animals indicate that a polysaccharide found in barley is apparently responsible for an increase in prolactin after beer ingestion.[5][6][7] Refer to the LactMed record on Alcohol for details.

References

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Substance Identification

Substance Name

Barley

Scientific Name

Hordeum vulgare

Drug Class

Breast Feeding

Lactation

Complementary Therapies

Food

Galactogogues

Phytotherapy

Plants, Medicinal