

Domperidone

What is Domperidone?

Domperidone (also called Motilium) is a prescription medication typically used to treat digestive disorders. A potential side effect of Domperidone is that it produces prolactin, a hormone that helps establish milk supply. Once milk supply is established, prolactin is less important in maintaining lactation. Because of this side effect, Domperidone has been prescribed off-label (meaning, a drug prescribed for a condition that hasn't been officially approved for by Health Canada) to help increase milk supply in breastfeeding/chestfeeding individuals.

Why would Domperidone be prescribed?

Before considering the use of Domperidone, breastfeeding/chestfeeding individuals should seek support from a health professional that is experienced and supportive of breastfeeding/chestfeeding. Both the lactating parent and baby should seek feeding support, education, and assessment of feeding technique to help determine cause of low milk supply.

Is Domperidone safe?

All medications may have potential side effects and come with some risks. Common side effects can include:

- Dry mouth
- Headache
- Migraines
- Upset stomach
- Dizziness
- Irritability
- Fatigue

Domperidone is not reported to cause side effects in babies and is considered compatible with breastfeeding /chestfeeding. Health Canada continues to provide safety reviews on this, and all medications so that people and health care providers can make informed choices. Domperidone is one of the many medications that can affect the electrical conduction of the heart. In 2012 and 2014, Health Canada completed a safety review of Domperidone, noting a small number of serious adverse heart events (no deaths have been reported). In many cases, other conditions known to cause electrical heart problems were also present, and the age of most cases was >60 years. Some Health Care Providers may request an electrocardiogram or ECG prior to prescribing Domperidone to patients at higher risk of heart effects. If you experience chest pain or palpitations, stop the medication and contact your health care provider. Health Canada completed a follow up safety review in 2021 and provided no further updates at that time. Health Canada recommends a dose not exceeding 30mg/day. It should be noted that one study reports that the use of Domperidone in younger adults appears not to be associated with a significant increase in cardiac problems. To review Health Canada's safety review visit: <https://hpr-rps.hres.ca/reg-content/summary-safety-review-detail.php?lang=en&linkID=SSR00277#references>

What dosage of Domperidone should be prescribed to optimize milk production?

A recommended dose for Domperidone to increase milk supply is not well studied. To optimize breast milk production, Dr. Jack Newman and the International Breastfeeding Centre recommends a starting dose of 30mg (three 10mg tablets) three times per day (9 tablets or 90mg/day). In some situations the dose may be increased up to 40mg four times per day (160mg/day). It is recommended to speak with your health care provider to determine the best dose that is specific to you. It is believed that the benefits of Domperidone in nursing parents outweigh the possible risk associated with the medication.

Should I be worried about withdrawal symptoms?

Health Canada is currently conducting a safety review looking at the potential psychological withdrawal symptoms of Domperidone. In some studies, withdrawal symptoms were experienced with abrupt discontinuation. A slow tapering of the medication is highly recommended. Abrupt weaning from the medication can result in symptoms such as:

- Insomnia
- Agitation
- Anxiety
- Panic attacks
- Depression

It is recommended to decrease your daily dose by 1 tablet (10mg) every 4-7 days. For example, if you are taking 9 tablets per day (90mg/day), go down to 8 tablets per day (80mg/day) for 4-7 days, then drop down to 7 tablets per day (70mg/day) for 4-7 days and so on, until you have weaned off the medication completely. If you experience any of the above symptoms while weaning off the medication, contact your Health Care Provider for further support and continue taking the medication.

Watch for signs of decreased milk supply if you continue to breastfeed/chestfeed. If supply has decreased, continue taking Domperidone at the previous dose that worked and contact your healthcare provider.

Can Domperidone be taken with other medications?

Be sure to speak with your Health Care Provider and/or Pharmacist if you are taking any other medications. Some medications used to treat fungal infections, some antidepressants/antipsychotics, and some antibiotics may interact with Domperidone. It is not recommended to consume grapefruit or its juice while taking Domperidone.

What else can I do to improve my milk supply?

While taking Domperidone, frequent follow up with a trained provider, such as our Public Health Nurses and International Board Certified Lactation Consultants is recommended. They may recommend pumping or other herbal supplements to maximize milk production. They will also work on developing a Care Plan that works for you and your family. To book an appointment at one of our Infant Feeding Clinics, call 1-800-660-5853 ext. 2467 or visit <https://healthunit.org/clinics-classes/infant-feeding-clinic/>. If you are looking for more information about Domperidone, visit <https://ibconline.ca/information-sheets/domperidone/>.