A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO
Herbs and Breastfeeding

Useful Herbs, Herbs to Avoid, and Helpful Hints from Mama
Earth Mama Organics’ safe, hospital recommended, Certified Organic, Non-GMO Project Verified herbal products and teas are specifically formulated to support the entire journey of childbirth, from pregnancy through postpartum recovery, breastfeeding, and baby care.

From the positive test to the big push, from the first latch to the thousandth diaper, Earth Mama effectively supports the miraculous wonders and common indignities of motherhood with effective herbal care. Trusted by doctors, midwives, neonatal intensive care units, lactation consultants and mamas worldwide, Earth Mama combines generations of women’s wisdom with traditional plant medicine to formulate certified organic herbal tea, soaps, balms, lotions, soothing sprays, and the first Non-GMO Project Verified nipple cream. We’ve been safely nurturing mamas this way since 2002 — and we’re happy you’re here.

The information about the use of herbs and essential oils contained in this book is not meant to be a substitute for seeking the advice of a qualified health care provider. It is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease. Always consult your health care provider about the use of herbs and essential oils, especially during pregnancy, when nursing a baby or with children.

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Who is Mama?

This is Melinda Olson; she’s the original Earth Mama. A mother and nurse, Melinda is also a not-so-secret plant lady/gardener and avid herbalist. (Yes. Her garden is amazing.) But in the spring of ’97, Melinda began studying medicinal herbs and how to extract their healing powers — which led to planting, nurturing and harvesting a wide variety of herbs. What was once a hobby “blossomed” (Intentional pun! You’re welcome!) into a life-changing understanding of plant medicine.

Her interest was fueled by a deep desire to educate people about our innate ability to combat everyday toxicity. As humans, we have the opportunity to live long and healthy lives, as long as we avoid harming ourselves — and the earth — in the process. Why not heal and support our bodies with what nature has readily available — that’s been in use for thousands of years?

In 2001, she began making and sharing organic tinctures, teas, soaps and salves using self-grown herbs. These were safe formulations grounded in earth wisdom and ancient knowledge — and they worked. Melinda had a feeling the world was ready for this kind of medicine — especially pregnant women, postpartum women, and their babies. And thus, Earth Mama the Company was born. The right way: in a garage.

Eventually, Earth Mama outgrew Melinda’s garage, laundry room, dining room, kitchen and halfway down the bedroom hall, so the company expanded into a facility in Clackamas, Oregon. Soon, thousands of pregnant women and new mamas looked to Earth Mama for safe herbal products for baby care, and to effectively treat the discomforts of pregnancy, postpartum and breastfeeding. Now, Melinda’s company is known as Earth Mama Organics ... but it’s still the same reliable, trusted line of mama and baby care that began over two decades ago. Even better? Melinda still formulates all the products, still runs the company, is still obsessed with plants, and, if you ask her, will probably share her wisdom about what it really means to be organic. For hours. Maybe even days. But honestly? That’s fine by us.
Breastfeeding is the natural way to nurture a new baby, but sometimes the Milk of Momness needs Mother Nature’s help to flow freely. Galactagogues (‘galact’ or ‘galacto’ is the Greek prefix that means milk, and the suffix ‘agogos’ means flow) are the earth’s herbal gifts to lactating women, and have been used for centuries to help increase milk supply. Herbal galatagogues can help stingy milk flow from healthy mama to healthy baby.

**ANISE SEED** (*Pimpinella anisum*) is a culinary spice and a digestive herb that helps dispel gas and relieve indigestion and nausea as well as increase milk flow. According to the German Commission E, it is used in combination with Fennel seed and Caraway seed for dyspeptic conditions and gastrointestinal discomfort.

**BLESSED THISTLE** (*Cnicus benedictus*) is a bitter tasting tonic herb that is often used in galactagogue teas and tinctures. The bitters stimulate the secretion of saliva and gastric juices. There is also much historical evidence that it helps increase breast milk. Blessed Thistle is a uterine stimulant and should not be consumed during pregnancy.

**CHASTE TREE** (*Vitex*) has historically been used to treat everything from hangovers (yay!) to flatulence (woo-hoo!) and fevers to low breast milk production. It has also been studied for reducing the symptoms of PMS and menopause.
GOAT’S RUE (*Galega officinalis*) has been recommended by the German commission E for its use as a galactagogue. Its galactagogue properties were first noted to effectively increase milk in goats. It is used by nursing mothers, as well as by farmers to increase milk production in their livestock. It grows so aggressively that it is now classified as a noxious weed. Goat’s Rue should not be confused with Rue (*Ruta graveolens*), which is used in primitive cultures as a powerful uterine stimulant and abortifacient.

FENNEL SEED (*Foeniculum vulgare*) is shown to increase milk production in goats and has long been used as a galactagogue by breastfeeding women. This licorice-tasting herb is also used as a digestive aid that can help to soothe a colicky breastfed baby and ease postpartum discomfort. It is contraindicated (do not use) during pregnancy.

FENUGREEK SEED (*Trigonella foenum-graecum*) is one of the herbs most often used to help increase breast milk supply. Its sweet/spicy flavor is popularly used in a variety of culinary dishes, including Indian curry. It is used to help soothe digestion and is well documented to effectively decrease cholesterol and blood sugar as well as increasing breast milk supply. It is generally recognized as safe, although because of its ability to stimulate the uterus, it is not for use during pregnancy. Large amounts of Fenugreek can cause maple syrup like odor in the sweat, milk and urine and it should be avoided by people with asthma or an allergy to chickpeas.
**MILK THISTLE** (*Silybum marianum*) is a liver protecting seed that has even been used to successfully treat mushroom poisoning. This marvelous little seed has recently been shown to interfere with the promotion and progression of prostate, breast and endocervical tumor cells. A very recent study documented that women using milk thistle had significant increase in breast milk over the population using a placebo.

**OATS** (*Avena sativa*) are often used for their emollient properties to help soothe dry, itching skin. They are also a very nutritive herb, high in calcium, protein, and fiber. Oats has been used for a wide variety of conditions, including reducing cholesterol and reducing anxiety or restlessness. Oats are considered good support for general weakness and are often helpful in restoring vigor and strength during convalescence, making oats and oatmeal a good supportive herb to nourish lactating women.

**RED RASPBERRY LEAF** (*Rubus idaeus*), though not a traditional galactagogue, is a richly nutritive uterine tonic herb, high in minerals that are helpful for good milk production and useful to strengthen postpartum and breastfeeding women.

Our bodies are amazing at doing what they do, like making babies and breast milk. And of course they can do their job much more easily if they are healthy, well rested, and well fed. Herbs, like the other plants we eat, serve to support and nourish a mama's body as it makes nourishment for her baby. Herbs truly are gifts from the earth.
1. Supply and demand is one of the biggest factors to help support the production of breast milk. There is a stimulus/response system between the breast and the brain. When the baby suckles, the brain releases prolactin to trigger breasts to manufacture more milk. The more baby is allowed to suck, the more the breast is stimulated to produce milk. So the more you ring the dinner bell, the more generous the buffet!

2. Breast milk comes in two courses. The initial offering is carbohydrate rich foremilk. Consider the foremilk the appetizer and salad. Next on the menu is the fat rich hindmilk. Hindmilk is important for growing babies who need those extra nutrients. If baby is switched from one breast to the other too soon before the first breast is drained, they essentially leave the table before the main course is served. A good rule of thumb is to finish the first breast first and start on the opposite side for the next feeding. Nurse, drain, rinse, repeat.

3. Nothing says “snuggle” and cements bonding like skin-to-skin contact between mama and her nursling. Sometimes lazy, sleepy sippers do a better job of getting down to business when they are held skin to skin.
4. You know how a flight attendant tells you to put on your own oxygen mask first? You can’t be much help to your child if you’re lying on the deck panting for air. The same thing is true when you’re nurturing a baby. Stress can affect a woman’s ability to produce breast milk, and with new mothers, rest and sleep can be very rare commodities. So when your well-meaning friends offer to bring over a casserole – accept it with gratitude! In fact, when your family says “let me know if there’s anything I can do,” invite them to toss in a load of laundry or do some grocery shopping. They really do want to help!

5. Even if you don’t sleep, rest when you have a chance. Your body has an amazing ability to recharge itself. Here’s some ancient wisdom for you: Rest when the baby rests, clean when the baby cleans. Making milk really is something of a superpower. But even Wonder Woman needs a nap sometimes!

6. In spite of what you hear, babies can’t be spoiled. Unlike peaches, they are perfect in-the-moment beings whose very survival depends on their ability to communicate their needs (see #10). Babies cry when they need to eat. When they are born, their stomachs are about the size of one shooter marble, and it takes as little as 7 ml. of milk to fill them up. Nursing when baby cries, nuzzles and roots keeps the supply and demand system in perfect balance without having a stuffed, regurgitating baby.

7. Babies have an innate need to suck, but mamas can get exhausted by active non-nutritive suckers, and bottles and pacifiers can cause nipple confusion. For this reason, wait until nursing is well established before you offer baby a pacifier. Huh? Pacifier you say? Mama time is comfort, sucking and feeding time. And important research shows that the use of pacifiers can significantly reduce the risk of SIDS. According to First Candle, experts recommend giving your baby a pacifier EVERY time he or she is placed down to sleep after about a month of successful breastfeeding.
8. **Eat well, mama.** Breastfeeding requires about 200-600 calories a day. This is not the time to try to diet back to your pre-pregnancy weight. Quite the opposite. What you eat is nourishing two people. So make every calorie count with a well-balanced diet of good whole grains, fresh fruits and vegetables and plenty of protein. Your body will use the calories wisely. It’s recovering from important work and needs the nutrition. And so does your baby.

9. **Lucky you! It’s now your job to keep track of someone else’s poop.** At around 3-4 weeks, bowel movements will decrease. Exclusively breastfed babies may have only one bowel movement every day or two, sometimes even longer. Breast milk is used very efficiently by the body and there are, as a rule, fewer “leftovers,” so bowel movements are less frequent than those of formula fed babies. Nursing well and urinating frequently are signs of a well-nourished baby.

10. **It takes a conscious effort to be calm when your baby is frustrated and crying. But remember that babies communicate by crying.** That’s all it is – communication. Relaxing through the anxiety of a crying baby can help you feel calmer, which leads to easier breastfeeding. Try some breathing techniques, count to ten, do one minute of meditation, run in place or do whatever you need to do to feel collected. Then pick up the baby and calmly make sure you have a good latch. You’ll be amazed at how quickly your calm reassurance is communicated to that squalling mass of squirming pink flesh. You’re doing a great job, mama!
1. NO SOAP, PLEASE
When breastfeeding, don’t wash your nipples with soap! Here’s why: your nipples have special nipple superpower ducts that secrete naturally lubricating, bacteria fighting oil. Yeah, we can hear you from here: “Wait, what? Don’t wash?” Yes. Hygiene is definitely important, especially since bacteria and fungus love dark, moist places (like behind a breast pad). But rinsing and air drying with your regular daily bath or shower should be plenty to keep your nipples in the pink.

2. BREASTFEEDING IS GOOD FOR YOU!
Obviously, yes — breastfeeding is good for your baby. But did you know it’s also good for your body? Research shows it may even help reduce chances of breast cancer. Women with a family history of breast cancer have a 59% lower risk of developing breast cancer if they breastfed their babies. So, in conclusion: breastfeeding leads to healthier babies and healthier mamas. The end.
3. **BE GENTLE**
For the love of all nipples across the land, do not try to “toughen them up.” There’s some age-old “advice” that says you’ve got to break in your nipples with a rough cloth or worse, a scrub brush. Nope. Just the thought of that makes us grab our breasts in pseudo-pain. Yes, like most skin, it takes a little bit of time for your nipples to get used to breastfeeding. In the meantime, keep your nipples soft with a soothing, non-toxic balm. But please. No scrubbing, OK? Your baby will get them road-ready soon enough.

4. **KEEP IT PURE**
No toxic chemicals please! If you think about it, what’s going on your nipples is going straight into your sweet baby’s mouth. Use a nipple cream that is as pure as anything else you would put on or in your baby. Allergic to wool? Well, here’s the thing about lanolin: it’s the sebum or grease from sheep’s wool. It’s sticky, and may contain allergens and even trace amounts of pesticides. Try using a gentle plant-based balm instead. We also don’t recommend nipple creams with comfrey, which has been shown to be a liver toxin. Organic calendula is the best herbal option to care for sore, cracked nipples. But — and this is the most important we’d like you to know — read the ingredients, and know your herbs!

5. **EVERY NIPPLE IS A GOOD NIPPLE**
Just like babies, nipples come in all shapes and sizes. If they are inverted or flat, you can still breastfeed! And the more you do, the more they will “pop out.” Like a little turkey baster, or your belly button in the last trimester. If you’re having difficulties, seek help from your friendly lactation consultant or specialist. But trust us: you got this.

6. **FREE THE NIPPLE — AND THE RIGHT BRA IS EVERYTHING**
Your breasts are hard at work making food for your baby. So give them and their sweet nipple sidekicks a supportive, comfortable bra. Or, if your nipples are really sensitive, go bra-free as much as possible. Comfort is key. Also, Nipples like air. And when they’re sore, well... any sort of touch is going to hurt. Give them a breather every once in a while — they’ll heal faster.

7. **BREASTMILK TO THE RESCUE**
If you’re experiencing sore, cracked nipples, massage a few drops of expressed breast milk onto them — breastmilk is a natural healer.

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Organic calendula is the best herbal option to care for sore, cracked nipples.
8. THE CABBAGE LEAF THING REALLY WORKS
Cabbage leaves really can help with sore, engorged breasts. It’s true! Nobody really knows why, but evidence — and a lot of motherly wisdom — shows that cabbage leaves placed directly on your nipples and breasts can ease the unearthly pain of sore nipples. Snip some leaves for your nipples, and snack on some coleslaw with the leftovers!

9. LEARN THE LATCH
The proper latch will help keep nipples pain-free and make breastfeeding a breeze. Breastfeeding is the most natural thing in the world, but if it’s your first time, you, your newborn and your nipples need a little support to get the hang of it. You needed help the first time you rode a bicycle, right? The same goes for breastfeeding. There are experts ready, willing and able to help, so find a trusted resource. It could be a nurse, lactation consultant, your mom or your best friend — just reach out and get yourself some support.

10. BABY BACKWASH IS GOOD FOR YOU
When a baby is nursing, there’s a whole lotta slurping going on. And with slurping, especially from someone who’s just learning how to slurp, there will be backwash. Yep, your baby’s breast milk backwash goes back through your nipples and back into your system — and according to this article, that backwash magically triggers infection-fighting leukocytes your breast milk naturally produces, and attunes it to your baby’s needs. In other words, your body creates specific medicine for your baby and delivers it via breast milk — and the concoction is different according to the illness. It’s like you have a craft bar in your boobs, and you’re the mixologist. Your body has all sorts of tricks up its sleeve!

Snip a few cabbage leaves for your nipples, and snack on some coleslaw with the leftovers!
Like the foods we eat and the medicines we take, some of the constituents in herbs are end up in breast milk and are ingested by a nursing baby. Some of the herbs on this list are included because they contain constituents that may be harmful to a mother or baby. Other herbs should be avoided because they are traditional antilactagogues used during weaning, and can reduce breast milk production.

**ALDER BUCKTHORN BERRY AND BARK** (*Rhamnus Frangula*): closely related to cascara sagrada – purative, laxative intestinal irritant, anthroquinones glycosides excreted in breast milk

**ALKANET** (*Alkanna tinctoria*): hepatotoxic phyrrolizidine alkaloids secreted in breast milk

**ALOE** (*Aloe barbadensis*): purgative/cathartic, anthroquinones glycosides excreted in breast milk

**BASIL** (*Ocimum basilicum*): possible mutogenic effect of the essential oil

**BEARBERRY** (*Arctostaphylos Uva ursi*): potential hepatotoxic hydroquinones secreted in breast milk

**BLACK COHOSH** (*Cimifugia racemosa*): digestive tract irritant, may cause digestive irritation for the baby

**BLADDERWRACK** (*Fucus vesiculosus*): high levels of iodine and possible heavy metal contamination
BORAGE (*Borago officinalis*): hepatotoxic pyrrolozidine alkaloids excreted in breast milk

BUTTERBUR (*Petasites hybridus*): hepatotoxic pyrrolozidine alkaloids excreted in breast milk

CASCARA SAGRADA BARK (*Rhamnus purshiana*): purative, laxative intestinal irritant, anthroquinones excreted in breast milk

CHAPARRAL (*Larrea tridentate*): potential toxicity to the infant

CINCHONA BARK (*Cinchona spp.*): potential toxicity to the infant

COLTSFOOT LEAF (*Tussilago farfara*): hepatotoxic pyrrolizidine alkaloids excreted in breast milk

COMFREY LEAF AND ROOT (*Symphytum officinale*): hepatotoxic pyrrolizidine alkaloids excreted in breast milk

DONG QUAI (*Angelica sinensis*): contains estrogenic compounds

ELECAMPANE (*Imula helenium*): potential toxicity to the infant

EPHEDRA/MA HUANG (*Ephedra sinica*): stimulants excreted in breast milk

GOLDENSEAL (*Hydrastis canadensis*): may increase infant bilirubin levels

GUARANA SEEDS (*Paullinia cupana*): stimulants secreted in breast milk

JOE-PYE WEED (*Eupatorium purpureum*): hepatotoxic pyrrolizidine alkaloids secreted in breast milk

KAVA KAVA (*Piper methysticum*): possible passage of pyrones into breast milk, central nervous system depressant

INDIAN SNAKEROOT (*Rauwolfia serpentine*): reserpine alkaloids, potential toxicity to the infant

LICORICE ROOT (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*): potential toxicity to the infant

MADDER ROOT (*Rubia tinctorum*): potential toxicity to the infant

MALE FERN (*Dryopteris filix-mas*): potential toxicity to the infant

MATE LEAVES (*Ilex paraguayensis*): stimulants excreted in breast milk

PRICKLY ASH BARK (*Zanthoxylum americanum*): digestive tract irritant, may cause digestive irritation for the baby

PULSATILLA PLANT (*Anemone pulsatilla*): digestive tract irritant, may cause digestive irritation for the baby

RHUBARB (*Rheum palmatum*): potential toxicity to the infant, may cause digestive irritation for the baby

SENNA LEAF (*Cassia spp.*): genotoxic anthraquinones excreted in breast milk

TOBACCO (*Nicotina tabacum*): diminished milk production, excreted in breast milk

WINTERGREEN LEAVES (*Gaultheria procumbens*): potential toxicity to the infant

WORMWOOD (*Artemis absinthium*): potential neurotoxins excreted in breast milk
HERBS THAT DECREASE BREAST MILK: 
Avoid During Breastfeeding

Herbs that can reduce breast milk are called antilactagogues. Several of these are in the mint family of herbs, and are recommended to be avoided in larger-than-culinary amounts during breastfeeding. Many women even experience a reduction of breast milk when they eat peppermint candies or menthol cough drops.

BUGELWEED LEAVES (Lycopus europaeus/Lycopus virginicus)

JASMIN FLOWERS (Jasminum pubescens)

PARSLEY LEAF (Petroselinum crispum): This is a case where “culinary amounts” really means a sprig or a sprinkle. The Middle Eastern salad dish tabbouleh has a large amount of parsley, and many women find that it reduces their breast milk supply.

PEPPERMINT LEAVES (Mentha piperita): Not recommended in larger than culinary amounts, including peppermint candies or breath mints.

SPEARMINT LEAVES (Mentha spicata)

SAGE (Salvia officinalis): a powerful abortifacient (aka: it may cause a miscarriage) that also reduces breast milk production. This herb contains thujone and is not recommended for nursing women or for women who are epileptic or prone to seizure, and especially during pregnancy.
A Note on Mints:

Many herbaceous plants are members of the mint family, including catmint, basil, rosemary, thyme, peppermint and spearmint.

They are generally perennials and have concentrated amounts of essential oils. The essential oils of these herbs should not be taken internally during pregnancy or lactation.

They may harm kidney and/or liver function and, in large concentrations, stimulate uterine contractions.

The herbs themselves should only be taken internally in culinary amounts during both pregnancy and lactation.

Of course, this isn’t a complete list of plants to be avoided during breastfeeding. Some plants are generally toxic and should not be ingested at all. But you’re not likely to ingest random unknown plants, or chomp on the highly toxic Castor Bean in your everyday culinary excursions. This list includes common herbs that you might see in herbal preparations, supplements or foods.

As always: if you are pregnant or breastfeeding, check with your healthcare provider before taking herbs, prescription or over-the-counter medications — for your safety and the safety of your child.
If you can’t find reputable organic herbs, or don’t know your tincture from your tisane, a blended galactagogue tea is probably your best bet. Earth Mama Organics’ Non-GMO Project Verified, USDA Certified 100% Organic Milkmaid Tea blends the best-quality, safest, time- and evidence-based research-tested herbs for healthy breast milk production, with attention to flavor and effectiveness.

Please note, Organic Milkmaid Tea is NOT for pregnancy, because many herbs, like fennel and fenugreek, are uterine stimulants, but after your babe is here you can safely use it. Sipping a soothing cup of tea is a great way to relax and take care of yourself, and encourages your incredible body to do what it naturally knows how to do. Want to put a fun spin on Organic Milkmaid Tea? Make it into a simple, delicious chai brew.

When Earth Mama Organics was in its infancy as a company, breastfeeding wasn’t part of the national conversation the way it is now. In the last 10-15 years, we’ve been applauding from the sidelines, proud to watch as the nation shifts the ways they think and talk about breastfeeding — including postpartum lactation support, lactation support at work and support from peers and partners. However, as recently as 2013, the CDC found that while up to 80% of women begin breastfeeding their

### ORGANIC MILKMAID FRENCH VANILLA CHAI
A yummy, warming sipper blended with Organic Milkmaid Tea — nice iced too!

**INGREDIENTS**
- 1 bag Organic Milkmaid Tea
- Splash of French Vanilla soy creamer
- Dash of ground organic cinnamon
- Dash of ground organic ginger

**DIRECTIONS**
- Brew one cup of Organic Milkmaid Tea extra strong, steeping for 12 minutes.
- Add French vanilla soy creamer to taste (approximately 1-2 Tbsp.).
- Garnish with a few sprinkles of ground cinnamon and ginger to taste.

*Mix, sip and enjoy!*

PLEASE NOTE: Organic Milkmaid Tea is formulated for use while breastfeeding, NOT for use during pregnancy.
infants, many women couldn’t continue to nurse over time as a result of a variety of constraints. So while we’ve come a long way, there’s still a lot of work to be done.

At the end of the day, no matter who we are, or where we come from, we can agree on this: everyone wants the best for their baby. The benefits of breastfeeding are endless — from the breast milk’s disease-fighting antibodies, to its reputation for lowering the risk of ear infections, asthma and childhood obesity. Not to mention the precious and bonding together-time that breastfeeding provides for a mama and baby. We’re here to support every mother who wishes to breastfeed, helping make it happen with a little assistance from Mother Nature. The plant medicine has been here for centuries — and they’re just as abundant and effective today as they were for our ancestors.

In fact, you might even say it’s a natural!

At the end of the day, no matter who we are, or where we come from, we can agree on this: everyone wants the best for their baby.


