



**EMORY WMHP BLOG**

**Hale's Breastfeeding Safety Ratings: Part 5 – Anxiolytics & Benzodiazepines**

Thomas Hale's *Medications and Mothers' Milk*, now in its 14<sup>th</sup> edition, has become the standard reference for the breastfeeding safety of medications. In this series, we provide a summary of Dr. Hale's ratings and recommendations for the major classes of psychiatric medications. In this entry in the series, we summarize Dr. Hale's findings regarding the safety of **Anxiolytics & Benzodiazepines** during breastfeeding.

Lactation Category	Generic Name	Brand Name(s)	Medication Class	Use(s)	Relative Infant Dose
<b>L2 - Safer</b>					
L2	Midazolam	Versed	Benzodiazepine	Hypnotic (medical procedures)	0.6%
L2	Nitrazepam	Mogadon	Benzodiazepine	Hypnotic	2.9%
L2	Quazepam	Doral	Benzodiazepine	Hypnotic	1.4%
<b>L3 – Moderately Safe</b>					
L3	Alprazolam	Xanax	Benzodiazepine	Anxiolytic	8.5%
L3	Buspirone	Buspar	Azapirone	Anxiolytic	Not reported
L3	Chlordiazepoxide	Librium	Benzodiazepine	Anxiolytic	Not reported
L3	Clonazepam	Klonopin	Benzodiazepine	Anxiolytic, anticonvulsant	2.8%
L3	Clorazepate	Tranxene	Benzodiazepine	Anxiolytic, anticonvulsant	Not reported
L3	Diazepam <sup>1</sup>	Valium	Benzodiazepine	Anxiolytic, anticonvulsant, muscle relaxant	0.2% - 0.4%
L3	Estazolam	Prosom	Benzodiazepine	Hypnotic	Not reported
L3	Flunitrazepam <sup>1</sup>	Rohypnol	Benzodiazepine	Hypnotic	Not reported
L3	Flurazepam	Dalmane	Benzodiazepine	Hypnotic	Not reported
L3	Halazepam	Paxipam	Benzodiazepine	Anxiolytic	Not reported
L3	Lorazepam	Ativan	Benzodiazepine	Anxiolytic, anticonvulsant	2.9%
L3	Lormetazepam	Loramet	Benzodiazepine	Hypnotic	Not reported
L3	Oxazepam	Serax	Benzodiazepine	Anxiolytic	1.0%
L3	Prazepam	Centrax	Benzodiazepine	Anxiolytic	Not reported
L3	Temazepam	Restoril	Benzodiazepine	Hypnotic	Not reported
L3	Triazolam	Halcion	Benzodiazepine	Hypnotic	Not reported
<b>L4 – Possibly Hazardous</b>					
L4	Diazepam <sup>1</sup>	Valium	Benzodiazepine	Anxiolytic, anticonvulsant, muscle relaxant	0.2% - 0.4%
L4	Flunitrazepam <sup>1</sup>	Rohypnol	Benzodiazepine	Hypnotic	Not reported
<b>L5 - Contraindicated</b>					
L5	N/A	N/A			
<b>Unrated</b>					
Unrated	N/A	N/A			

<sup>1</sup>Diazepam and flunitrazepam are rated L3 for short-term use and L4 for "chronic use" by Hale.

**Additional Thoughts from the Emory WMHP**

- **Benzodiazepine Safety Management** – Nursing infants exposed to benzodiazepines should be monitored for sedation, poor feeding effort, poor muscle tone ("floppy"), and breathing difficulties including apnea. Safety can be improved by: 1) using minimal doses, 2) avoiding chronic use, 3) using agents with no active metabolites (e.g., alprazolam, clonazepam, lorazepam, oxazepam) to minimize the potential for accumulation in the infant, 4) "pumping and dumping" (cf. [Hale's Breastfeeding Safety Ratings – Part 1](#)).