



Coleus

Revised: May 15, 2024.

Drug Levels and Effects

Summary of Use during Lactation

Coleus amboinicus (*Plectranthus amboinicus*) leaves are a traditional galactagogue used in Indonesia called torbangun or bangun-bangun in the local languages.[1] Studies of poor quality indicate that it might have some efficacy as a galactagogue, but the studies are inadequate to establish activity.[2-4] Galactagogues should never replace evaluation and counseling on modifiable factors that affect milk production.[5,6] No data exist on the excretion of any components of *Coleus amboinicus* into breastmilk or on the safety and efficacy of *Coleus amboinicus* in nursing mothers or infants, although it has been used for hundreds of years in Indonesia with apparent safety. A related plant, *Coleus forskohlii*, is well tolerated as a supplement.

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.

Disclaimer: Information presented in this database is not meant as a substitute for professional judgment. You should consult your healthcare provider for breastfeeding advice related to your particular situation. The U.S. government does not warrant or assume any liability or responsibility for the accuracy or completeness of the information on this Site.

Attribution Statement: LactMed is a registered trademark of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Effects on Lactation and Breastmilk

A study of 67 healthy women who delivered a fullterm infant and desired to breastfeed for at least 4 months compared torbangun (*Coleus amboinicus*), fenugreek, and a control product containing placental extract and vitamin B12 (Molocco+B12) for their effects on breastmilk volume. No mention was made of any breastfeeding support provided to the women. Participants were randomly assigned to receive one of the products for 30 days and followed for another 30 days. A soup was made from 150 grams of *Coleus amboinicus* leaves 6 days per week for 30 days, beginning on the second postpartum day, and it was consumed during the day. Infants were weighed before and after each nursing at 2-week intervals during the study to measure 24-hour milk volume. In the torbangun group, the milk volume on day 28 was statistically greater than on day 14. The increase in milk volume on day 28 was 33% in the torbangun group, compared to a decrease of 15% in the control group and a decrease of 14% in the fenugreek group. However, the baseline production in the torbangun group was 20 to 23% lower than in the other groups and there was no statistical difference in milk volume at any time compared to the initial volume of milk in the control group. Analysis of breastmilk found no decrease in nutritional quality of milk in the torbangun group.[7]

A nonrandomized, unblinded study in Indonesia gave some mothers *Coleus amboinicus* leaves as a soup and other mothers nothing for 7 days after delivery. Based on maternal surveys, those who ingested *Coleus* appeared to produce milk a few hours sooner than those who did not (average 2.37 vs 3 days) and supplement their infants less frequently.[4]

A nonblinded study in Indonesia randomized postpartum women with perceived low milk supply to either an herbal decoction containing 25 grams *Sauropus androgynus* (katuk) leaves, 10 grams *Coleus amboinicus* (torbangun) leaves and 5 grams papaya leaves (n = 60) or to 500 mg *Sauropus androgynus* extract (CV Al-Ghuroba, Indonesia; n = 60). Patients were to take the product and weigh their infant twice daily for 28 days. Maternal serum prolactin was measured on day 14 and 28. Breast milk volume and infant's weight increased on days 14 and 28, and serum prolactin levels in decreased in both groups; however, the changes were not statistically significant. Mean infant weights increased, with no difference between the two treatments. Two mothers in the combination group and 3 in the extract group had increases in aspartate aminotransferase and/or alanine aminotransferase.[8]

References

1. Damanik R. Torbangun (*Coleus amboinicus* lour): A Batakese traditional cuisine perceived as lactagogue by Batakese lactating women in Simalungun, North Sumatera, Indonesia. *J Hum Lact* 2009;25:64-72. PubMed PMID: 18984829.
2. Mortel M, Mehta SD. Systematic review of the efficacy of herbal galactogogues. *J Hum Lact* 2013;29:154-62. PubMed PMID: 23468043.
3. Zapantis A, Steinberg JG, Schilit L. Use of herbals as galactagogues. *J Pharm Pract* 2012;25:222-31. PubMed PMID: 22392841.
4. Nasution SS, Eliana R, Aizar E, Pramita R. Effectiveness of *Coleus amboinicus* consumption interventions in increasing breast milk production and improving maternal health status during COVID 19 pandemic. *Open Access Macedonian J Med Sci* 2022;10:202-8. doi:10.3889/oamjms.2022.7094
5. Brodribb W. ABM Clinical Protocol #9: Use of galactogogues in initiating or augmenting maternal milk production, second revision 2018. *Breastfeed Med* 2018;13:307-14. PubMed PMID: 29902083.
6. Breastfeeding challenges: ACOG Committee Opinion, Number 820. *Obstet Gynecol* 2021;137:e42-e53. PubMed PMID: 33481531.
7. Damanik R, Wahlqvist ML, Wattanapenpaiboon N. Lactagogue effects of Torbangun, a Batakese traditional cuisine. *Asia Pac J Clin Nutr* 2006;15:267-74. PubMed PMID: 16672214.
8. Zulkarnain Z, Fitriani U, Ardiyanto D, et al. Galactagogue activity of poly-herbal decoction from Indonesia: A randomized open label controlled trial. *J Complement Integr Med* 2024. PubMed PMID: 38644615.

Substance Identification

Substance Name

Coleus

Scientific Name

Coleus amboinicus

Drug Class

Breast Feeding

Lactation

Milk, Human

Complementary Therapies

Phytotherapy

Plants, Medicinal