

**UABDIVULGA**

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## Mate causes neonatal abstinence syndrome



Mate is a very common infusion in many South American countries. It's prepared by steeping dried leaves of yerba mate in hot water. UAB researchers have observed a neonatal baby, whose mother is a heavy

consumer of mate, who presented increased jitteriness and irritability, high-pitched crying, and other mild neurological anomalies. Their observation have demonstrated a relation between these symptoms and a chronic exposition to caffeine and theobromine, two very abundant substances in mate.

The premature newborn of a mother who reported drinking mate during pregnancy presented with increased jitteriness and irritability, high-pitched cry, hypertonia in the limbs, and brisk tendon reflexes consistent with neonatal withdrawal syndrome.

High concentrations of caffeine and theobromine were detected in various maternal and neonatal biological matrices (placenta, cord serum, neonatal urine, maternal and neonatal hair, meconium, and breast milk), demonstrating both acute and chronic prenatal and postnatal exposure to these methylxanthines, contained in high amounts in homemade mate.

Symptoms progressively disappeared at 84 hours of age, although intermittent irritability was still present when the infant was discharged at 24 days of age. Fluctuating caffeine (and theobromine) content in different breast milk feeds likely generated the baby's irritability, due to either the physiological stimulatory effects of the methylxanthines or postnatal withdrawal syndrome as the substances cleared from the body. The mother was strongly advised to initiate a considerable, progressive, constant reduction of mate consumption to a maximum of 2 cups a day for the duration of breastfeeding.

**Óscar García-Algar**

[Oscar.Garcia@uab.cat](mailto:Oscar.Garcia@uab.cat)

## References

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