Ep. 85: Radiation & Breastfeeding: Understanding the Risks and Realities

In this episode of the ***MotherToBaby Podcast***, host and genetic counselor Chris Stallman welcomes Dr. Emily Caffrey, a certified health physicist at the Health Physics Society and the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Together, they dive into one of the most frequently asked topics: how radiation exposure may impact breastfeeding.

Dr. Caffrey explains the difference between ionizing and non-ionizing radiation, details how imaging procedures like X-rays, CT scans, and MRIs interact with the body, and addresses concerns around contrast agents and radioactive tracers. The episode also covers what breastfeeding women working around radiation should know, including practical safety tips and case-by-case considerations.

Key Takeaways:

- Diagnostic imaging procedures do not make breast milk radioactive or require stopping breastfeeding
- Some radioactive tracers or therapeutic treatments may require temporary or permanent changes to breastfeeding plans, depending on the specific agent and dose
- Always inform your healthcare provider that you're breastfeeding and ask questions about any upcoming procedures
- Expert help is available—don't rely on internet searches alone

Resources mentioned in this episode:

- MotherToBaby.org
- Health Physics Society
- American College of Radiology Guidelines
- Call 866-626-6847 or text 855-999-3525 to speak with a MotherToBaby specialist

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