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Albuterol and Pregnancy

This sheet talks about the risks that exposure to albuterol can have during pregnancy. With each pregnancy, all women have a 3% to 5% chance of having a baby with a birth defect. This information should not take the place of medical care and advice from your health care provider.

What is albuterol?

Albuterol (also called salbutamol) is a medication used for the treatment of asthma. It is in a class of medications called beta₂-agonists (β₂-agonists). β₂-agonists are bronchodilators, meaning that they help to open the airways in the lungs. Albuterol is used in fast-acting inhalers for treatment of asthma.

I just found out that I am pregnant. Should I stop using my albuterol inhaler?

No. You should not stop taking any medications without first talking with your doctor. Albuterol is considered a preferred medicine for treatment of asthma during pregnancy.

It is important to consider the benefits of controlling asthma symptoms during pregnancy. Untreated asthma increases the risk for complications for both the mother and the baby. For more information about asthma in pregnancy, please see the OTIS fact sheet [Asthma and Pregnancy](#).

Does albuterol cross the placenta and get to the baby?

When albuterol is inhaled very limited amounts of the drug enter the blood, and even less is expected to reach the developing baby. The amount reaching a developing baby is expected to be insignificant.

Can taking albuterol during my pregnancy cause a birth defect?

Limited data do not suggest an increased risk for birth defects with the use of inhaled albuterol during pregnancy. One study evaluated the safety of five different inhaled β₂-agonist bronchodilators in the first trimester of pregnancy. This study did not find an increase in the number of birth defects with use of any of these medications. Only 20 of the 259 women in this study took albuterol.

Can taking albuterol during pregnancy cause other pregnancy complications?

Albuterol was at one time used in the second and third trimester of pregnancy to prevent preterm labor. For treatment of preterm labor, albuterol was given in high oral doses (by mouth). Treatment with high oral doses has been associated with an increase in maternal and fetal heart rate and a drop in maternal blood pressure. These effects are transient (meaning they do not last). Long term effects from increased fetal heart rate have not been documented. Treatment with inhaled albuterol at prescribed doses does *not* cause these effects.

Can I take albuterol while breastfeeding?

Although there have not been any studies of women taking albuterol while breastfeeding, use of an albuterol inhaler is not expected to result in high enough levels in the

mother's bloodstream to pass into breast milk in significant amounts. Inhaled bronchodilators are generally considered acceptable for use during breastfeeding.

Is there a concern if my partner was taking albuterol when I got pregnant?

There are currently no data to suggest that paternal use of albuterol at the time of conception increases the risk for a birth defect. For more information about a father's exposures and pregnancy, please see the OTIS fact sheet [Paternal Exposures and Pregnancy](#).

OTIS is currently conducting a [study looking at asthma and the medications used to treat asthma in pregnancy](#). If you are interested in taking part in this study, please call 1-877-311-8972.

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Selected References:

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Rayburn WF, et al. 1994. Short-term effects of inhaled albuterol on maternal and fetal circulations. *Am J Obstet Gynecol* 171:770-3.

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If you have questions about the information on this fact sheet or other exposures during pregnancy, call OTIS at 1-866-626-6847.