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Finasteride (Propecia[®]/Proscar[®]) and Pregnancy

This sheet talks about the risks that exposure to finasteride 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 finasteride?

Finasteride is a medication used for the treatment and prevention of male pattern baldness. It blocks a chemical in the body called 5-alpha-reductase. Finasteride has also been approved for treatment of benign prostatic hyperplasia. Finasteride is not approved at this time for use in women. Finasteride is marketed under the brand names Propecia[®] and Proscar[®].

Is there an increased risk for birth defects if I take finasteride during pregnancy?

Finasteride is not approved for use in women. Pregnant monkeys who were given large doses of finasteride by mouth had male offspring with abnormalities of the sex organs. There are no human studies, but because of the possible risk of genital defects in male babies, women should not take this medication during pregnancy.

My partner is taking finasteride but is wondering if he should stop before I become pregnant. Is this necessary, and if so, how long does it stay in the body?

Your partner should discuss the benefits of taking the medication and any possible harmful effects from not taking it with his healthcare provider before deciding to stop treatment. There is no known reason for him to stop taking this medication while planning a family. If he does decide to stop using

finasteride, it takes an average of two days for most of the drug to be eliminated from the body after the last dose.

If my partner decides to continue taking finasteride, will it be more difficult for me to become pregnant?

There is no evidence that if your partner is taking this medication it will make it more difficult for you to become pregnant. Some small differences have been seen in the semen of males taking finasteride. These differences reversed when the men stopped taking the medication. There are no reports linking this medication to infertility in humans or an inability to become pregnant.

Is there an increased risk for birth defects if the baby's father is taking finasteride when I become pregnant?

A study in rats did not show an increased risk for birth defects after the male rats were given finasteride. At this time, there are no studies in humans. It is not likely that a man taking finasteride at the time of conception would have an increased risk of fathering a baby with a birth defect.

Should my partner stop taking finasteride while I am pregnant?

There is a theoretical, although highly unlikely, risk for birth defects of a male baby's sex organs if the couple has intercourse during the stage of pregnancy when the sex organs are developing (8 to 15 weeks of gestation). However, the amount of the drug found in the semen is very small and is not felt to be enough to harm a male baby.

If my partner stops using finasteride will there be side effects?

Finasteride must be used daily for three months, on average, before results can be seen. Continued use is recommended to sustain this benefit. There is no lasting benefit if treatment is stopped, and there will be a reversal of any benefits within twelve months of stopping treatment.

If I touch or handle finasteride tablets during pregnancy does the baby have an increased risk for birth defects?

Women are told not to handle finasteride tablets that are crushed or broken during pregnancy. However, it is highly unlikely that enough of the medication would get through the skin during the course of normal handling to be a problem.

Is it a problem if my husband uses finasteride while I am breastfeeding?

No. Having sexual intercourse with your partner while he is taking finasteride will not result in high enough amounts of the medication entering your body to affect your breast milk.

February 2009.
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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.***