

Albuterol

This sheet is about exposure to albuterol in pregnancy and while breastfeeding. This information is based on available published literature. It should not take the place of medical care and advice from your healthcare provider.

What is albuterol?

Albuterol (also called salbutamol) is a medication used for the treatment of breathing conditions like asthma. It is a bronchodilator (a beta2-agonist bronchodilator). Bronchodilators help to open the airways in the lungs so you can breathe better. Albuterol has commonly been used as an inhaled medication in fast-acting inhalers for immediate treatment of trouble breathing and wheezing. Some brand names are Proventil® and Ventolin®. Albuterol can also be found in combination with another medication, budesonide in a medication called Airsupra®.

When albuterol is inhaled, it is absorbed into the body in lower amounts compared to pill / tablet forms of the medication. It is unknown how much, if any, of the medication reaches the fetus when used as an inhaler. Research suggests that the amount is likely small. Use of a fast-acting albuterol inhaler more than two days per week can be a sign that asthma symptoms may not be well controlled. If so, talk with your healthcare provider about the best way to treat your asthma.

Sometimes when women find out they are pregnant, they think about changing how they take their medication, or stopping their medication altogether. However, it is important to treat asthma during pregnancy. Talk with your healthcare providers before making any changes to how you take this medication. Your healthcare providers can talk with you about the benefits of treating your condition and the risks of untreated illness during pregnancy. Untreated asthma increases the chance for complications for both the woman who is pregnant and the fetus. For more information, please see the MotherToBaby fact sheet on Asthma at <https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/asthma-and-pregnancy/>.

I take albuterol. Can it make it harder for me to get pregnant?

Studies in humans have not been done to see if taking albuterol can make it harder to get pregnant. Animal studies have shown no effect on fertility.

Does taking albuterol increase the chance for miscarriage?

Miscarriage is common and can occur in any pregnancy for many different reasons. Studies have not been done to see if albuterol increases the chance of miscarriage.

Does taking albuterol increase the chance of birth defects?

Birth defects can happen in any pregnancy for different reasons. Out of all babies born each year, about 3 out of 100 (3%) will have a birth defect. We look at research studies to try to understand if an exposure, like albuterol, might increase the chance of birth defects in a pregnancy. Although data is limited, studies do not suggest an increased chance for birth defects with the use of inhaled albuterol during pregnancy.

One study looked at the use of 5 different inhaled beta2-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. Of the 259 women who were pregnant in this study, 20 of them took albuterol. Another study found a link between albuterol use and several types of birth defects. However, this study could not rule out the influence of asthma. Other studies do not support the suggestion that albuterol causes an increased chance for a pattern of birth defects.

Does taking albuterol in pregnancy increase the chance of other pregnancy-related problems?

Albuterol has been used in the second and third trimester of pregnancy to prevent preterm delivery (delivery before 37 weeks of pregnancy). For treatment of preterm delivery, 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 temporary. Long term effects from increased fetal heart rate have not been reported. Treatment with inhaled albuterol at prescribed doses has not been shown to cause these effects.

Does taking albuterol in pregnancy affect future behavior or learning for the child?

Studies have not been done to see if albuterol can increase the chance of behavior or learning issues for the child.

Breastfeeding while taking albuterol:

There have not been any studies among women taking albuterol while breastfeeding. However, using an albuterol inhaler is expected to lead to low amounts in the blood system and therefore likely low amounts at most in breastmilk. Inhaled bronchodilators have generally been considered acceptable for use during breastfeeding. Be sure to talk to your healthcare provider about all your breastfeeding questions.

If a man takes albuterol, could it affect fertility or increase the chance of birth defects?

Studies have not been done to see if albuterol could affect male fertility (ability to get a woman pregnant) or increase the chance of birth defects above the background risk. In general, exposures that fathers or sperm donors have are unlikely to increase risks to a pregnancy. For more information, please see the MotherToBaby fact sheet Paternal Exposures at <https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/paternal-exposures-pregnancy/>.

MotherToBaby is currently conducting a study looking at asthma and the medications used to treat asthma in pregnancy. If you would like to learn more, please call 1-877-311-8972 or visit <https://mothertobaby.org/join-study/>.

Please click here to view references.

Questions? Call 866.626.6847 | Text 855.999.3525 | Email or Chat at [MotherToBaby.org](https://mothertobaby.org).

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