Acyclovir (Zovirax®) | Valacyclovir (Valtrex®)

This sheet is about exposure to acyclovir/ valacyclovir in pregnancy and while breastfeeding. This information is based on published research studies. It should not take the place of medical care and advice from your healthcare providers.

What is acyclovir/valacyclovir?

Acyclovir (Zovirax®) is an antiviral medication that has been used to treat symptoms from cold sores and genital herpes caused by the herpes virus. It is also prescribed to treat chickenpox and shingles. Acyclovir can help relieve the pain and help the healing of sores or blisters. Valacyclovir (Valtrex®) is like acyclovir and is used to treat the same types of infections. Valacyclovir changes to acyclovir once inside the body.

Acyclovir/valacyclovir has been prescribed during pregnancy when a woman has a primary (first time) genital herpes infection. Primary infections can be life-threatening or lead to complications in a pregnancy. A rare but serious lung complication caused by chickenpox virus infection called varicella pneumonia might also require treatment with these medications. MotherToBaby has a fact sheet on varicella infection (chickenpox) here: https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/varicella/.

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 talk with your healthcare providers before making any changes to how you take your medication. Your healthcare providers can talk with you about the benefits of treating your condition and the risks of untreated illness during pregnancy.

I take acyclovir/valacyclovir. Can it make it harder for me to get pregnant?

It is not known if acyclovir/valacyclovir can make it harder to get pregnant.

Does taking acyclovir/valacyclovir increase the chance of miscarriage?

Miscarriage is common and can occur in any pregnancy for many different reasons. Studies have not found an increased chance of miscarriage with acyclovir/valacyclovir use.

Does taking acyclovir/valacyclovir 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 acyclovir/valacyclovir, might increase the chance of birth defects in a pregnancy.

Taking acyclovir/valacyclovir during pregnancy is not expected to increase the chance of birth defects. Studies have not found an increased chance of birth defects in over 500 births reviewed by the manufacturer and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Another study found no increased chance of birth defects in more than 1,500 infants exposed to acyclovir and over 200 infants exposed to valacyclovir during the first trimester of pregnancy.

Does taking acyclovir/valacyclovir in pregnancy increase the chance of other pregnancy-related problems?

It is not known if acyclovir/valacyclovir use can increase the chance of other pregnancy-related problems, such as preterm delivery (birth before week 37 of pregnancy) or low birth weight (weighing less than 5 pounds, 8 ounces [2500 grams] at birth). However, clinical case reports have not reported increased chances of preterm delivery, which is reassuring. It is important to note that untreated infections could cause problems for the woman who is pregnant, the pregnancy, and the newborn. Be sure to talk to a healthcare provider if you have or suspect you have an untreated infection during pregnancy.

Does taking acyclovir/valacyclovir in pregnancy affect future behavior or learning for the child?

Studies have not been done to see if acyclovir/valacyclovir can affect a child's future behavior or learning after exposure during pregnancy.

Breastfeeding while taking acyclovir/valacyclovir:

Acyclovir passes into breast milk in small amounts. Acyclovir is commonly used in newborns and is not expected to cause problems for breastfed babies. If you apply acyclovir cream or ointment to your breast, clean the area before breastfeeding. Be sure to talk to your healthcare provider about all your breastfeeding questions.

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

Information on the effects of acyclovir/valacyclovir on men's fertility (ability to make healthy sperm) is limited. One study in 20 men found that high doses of acyclovir for 6 months did not lower sperm production. Studies have not been done to know if acyclovir/valacyclovir can increase the chance of birth defects. 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/.

Please click here for references.

Questions? Call 866.626.6847 | Text 855.999.3525 | Email or Chat at MotherToBaby.org.

Disclaimer: MotherToBaby Fact Sheets are meant for general information purposes and should not replace the advice of your health care provider. MotherToBaby is a service of the non-profit Organization of Teratology Information Specialists (OTIS). Copyright by OTIS, June 1, 2026.