Alprazolam

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

What is alprazolam?

Alprazolam is a medication that has been used to treat anxiety and panic disorders, including anxiety associated with depression. It is in a class of medication called benzodiazepines. Alprazolam has been sold under the brand names Xanax®, Niravam®, or Gabazolamine-0.5®.

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 this medication. If you take this medication regularly and then suddenly stop taking it, you could have withdrawal symptoms. Some reported withdrawal symptoms include seizures and rebound anxiety. Also, untreated anxiety and depression can increase risks to a pregnancy. Your healthcare providers can talk with you about the benefits of treating your condition and the risks of untreated illness during pregnancy.

MotherToBaby has sheets on anxiety https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/anxiety-fact/ and depression https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/depression-pregnancy/.

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

It is not known if alprazolam can make it harder to get pregnant.

Does taking alprazolam increase the chance of miscarriage?

Miscarriage is common and can occur in any pregnancy for many different reasons. It is unlikely that alprazolam would greatly increase the chance of miscarriage.

Does taking alprazolam 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 alprazolam, might increase the chance of birth defects in a pregnancy.

Most studies on alprazolam use in the first trimester have not reported an increased chance of birth defects. Two reports that looked at prescription records reported a higher chance for heart defects if a prescription for alprazolam was filled during pregnancy. Studies based on prescription records cannot tell if a person took the medication, so it is hard to know if the outcomes are related to the medication or other factors. Overall, an increased chance of birth defects has not been proven.

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

Some studies have suggested that alprazolam might increase the chance of preterm delivery (birth before week 37) and low birth weight (less than 5 pounds, 8 ounces [2500g] at birth). Other studies have not found this association.

I need to take alprazolam during my pregnancy. Will it cause withdrawal symptoms in my baby after birth?

The use of benzodiazepines, including alprazolam, during pregnancy can cause temporary symptoms in newborns soon after birth. These symptoms are sometimes referred to as withdrawal. Symptoms can include trouble regulating body temperature, trouble breathing, low energy, poor feeding, and vomiting. Most often, symptoms start soon after birth and last several days. Not all babies exposed to alprazolam will have symptoms. It is important that your healthcare providers know you are taking alprazolam so that if symptoms occur, your baby can get the care that is best for them.

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

Studies have not been done to see if alprazolam can cause behavior or learning issues for the child.

Breastfeeding while taking alprazolam:

Alprazolam gets into breast milk. While it is possible to breastfeed while taking alprazolam, a different medication might be preferred. If you suspect the baby has any symptoms (being too sleepy, poor feeding, and poor weight gain), contact the child's healthcare provider. After a single dose of alprazolam, there is usually no need to wait to breastfeed.

The product label for alprazolam recommends women who are breastfeeding not use this medication. But the benefit of treating your condition and breastfeeding may outweigh possible risks of taking alprazolam. Your healthcare providers can talk with you about using alprazolam and what treatment is best for you. Be sure to talk to your healthcare provider about all your breastfeeding questions.

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

There is 1 report of a man who had delayed ejaculation and impotence (trouble with getting and keeping an erection) while taking alprazolam. One small study found lower sperm motility (movement) in those taking psychotropic medications (including alprazolam) compared to men who did not take psychotropic medication. These issues might make it harder to conceive a pregnancy. In general, exposures that men or sperm donors have are less likely to increase risks to a pregnancy. For more general information, please see the MotherToBaby fact sheet Paternal Exposures at https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/paternal-exposures-pregnancy/

Please click here for references.

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