Amoxicillin and Clavulanate

This sheet talks about exposure to Amoxicillin and Clavulanate in a pregnancy and while breastfeeding. This information should not take the place of medical care and advice from your healthcare provider.

What is amoxicillin/clavulanate (amox/clav)?

This combination medication is an antibiotic used to treat a variety of bacterial infections. It is a combination of amoxicillin, a penicillin-like antibiotic, and clavulanate, a drug that increases the effectiveness of amoxicillin. Brand names include Amoclav®, Augmentin XR® and Clavamox®.

I take amox/clav. Can it make it harder for me to get pregnant?

Studies have not been done to see if amox/clav could make it harder for a woman to become pregnant.

I just found out that I am pregnant. Should I stop taking amox/clav?

If you were prescribed amox/clav by your healthcare provider, talk with them before making any changes in how you take this medication. It is important to consider the benefits of treating infections during pregnancy.

Does taking amox/clav increase the chance of miscarriage?

Miscarriage can occur in any pregnancy. When taken in the recommended doses, amox/clav is unlikely to increase the chance for miscarriage.

Does taking amox/clav in the first trimester increase the chance of birth defects?

In every pregnancy, a woman starts out with a 3-5% chance of having a baby with a birth defect. This is called her background risk. Most studies have not found an increased chance for birth defects when amox/clav is taken during the first trimester; however, there are very few studies available. There are more studies looking at the use of amoxicillin alone during pregnancy. A few studies have shown an higher chance of cleft lip (opening in the lip) with or without cleft palate (opening in the roof of the mouth) when amoxicillin is taken during the first trimester. However there are other studies that have not found a higher chance for cleft lip with or without cleft palate. Based on the current information, the overall chance of a cleft in lip and/or palate is considered to be low if a woman is taking amox/clav in a pregnancy.

Could taking amox/clav in the second or third trimester cause other pregnancy complications?

There is limited information regarding the use of amox/clav during the second trimester, but studies so far do not report an increased chance for pregnancy problems when used in this time period.

For use in the third trimester, there is one large study of women who had an increased risk for preterm labor, a condition in which a woman starts the early stages of childbirth before 37 weeks of pregnancy. The women who were treated with amox/clav were found to have a small increased chance for a serious bacterial infection known as necrotizing enterocolitis (NEC) in their newborns. This is a condition that can injure a baby’s intestines. Further review has found some studies that confirm this chance and others that do not. Overall, the chance that the use of amox/clav increases the risk of NEC is low.

Does taking amox/clav in pregnancy cause any long-term problems in behavior or learning for the baby?

One study that has followed hundreds of children up to age 11 years did not find that prenatal exposure to amox/clav was linked to learning or behavior problems.

Can I breastfeed while taking amox/clav?

Amox/clav enters the breast milk, however, based on a small number of studies; it has not been shown to cause problems for a nursing baby. A study of 67 mothers taking this product found that there were no serious health effects in the breastfeeding infants. While some babies had a possible allergic reaction, such as rash, diarrhea, irritability and constipation, the reactions did not last long. If you think your baby has developed a side effect from medication that might be in your milk, talk to your child’s healthcare provider. Talk to your healthcare provider about all your
breastfeeding questions.

If a man takes amox/clav, could it affect his fertility (ability to get partner pregnant) or increase the chance of birth defects?

There are no studies looking at possible risks to a pregnancy when the father takes amox/clav. In general, exposures that fathers 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/pdf/.

Please click here for references.