Amoxicillin and Clavulanic Acid

This sheet is about exposure to amoxicillin and clavulanic acid 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 are amoxicillin and clavulanic acid?

Amoxicillin is a penicillin-like antibiotic. Clavulanic acid is a medication that helps amoxicillin work better.

These two medications are combined to make an antibiotic that has been used to treat infections caused by bacteria.

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 amoxicillin and clavulanic acid. Can it make it harder for me to get pregnant?

It is not known if taking amoxicillin and clavulanic acid can make it harder to get pregnant.

Does taking amoxicillin and clavulanic acid increase the chance of miscarriage?

Miscarriage is common and can occur in any pregnancy for many different reasons. Studies have not been done to see if taking amoxicillin and clavulanic acid together can increase the chance of miscarriage. One study on amoxicillin did not find a higher chance of miscarriage.

Does taking amoxicillin and clavulanic acid 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 amoxicillin and clavulanic acid, might increase the chance of birth defects in a pregnancy.

Most studies have not found an increased chance of birth defects when amoxicillin or clavulanic acid are taken during the first trimester. However, there are very few studies available about this combination of medication. There are more studies looking at the use of amoxicillin only during pregnancy. A few of these studies have shown a higher chance of cleft lip and/or cleft palate (an opening in the upper lip and/or the roof of the mouth that needs surgery to be corrected) when amoxicillin is taken during the first trimester. Other studies on amoxicillin use have not found a higher chance of cleft lip and/or palate. Overall, the chance of cleft lip and/or palate is expected to be low if amoxicillin and clavulanic acid is used in the first trimester of pregnancy.

Does taking amoxicillin and clavulanic acid in pregnancy increase the chance of other pregnancy-related problems?

Taking amoxicillin and clavulanic acid is not expected to increase the chance of pregnancy-related problems such as preterm delivery (birth before week 37) or low birth weight (weighing less than 5 pounds, 8 ounces [2500 grams] at birth).

Studies have looked at pregnancy outcomes in women treated with antibiotics to help prevent infection following preterm premature rupture of membranes (PPROM). PPROM is when the fluid-filled sac surrounding the fetus breaks open before 37 weeks of pregnancy. Some studies have suggested that using amoxicillin with clavulanic acid following PPROM increases the chance of a serious bacterial infection known as necrotizing enterocolitis (NEC) in the newborn. NEC is a condition that can injure a baby’s intestines. Although the chance of NEC in the newborn is likely to be low with the use of amoxicillin and clavulanic acid following PPROM, some study authors have suggested that other antibiotics might be preferred in these cases.

Does taking amoxicillin and clavulanic acid in pregnancy affect future behavior or learning

for the child?

A study that followed hundreds of children up to the age of 11 years old did not find that using amoxicillin and clavulanic acid in pregnancy causes learning or behavior problems.

Breastfeeding while taking amoxicillin and clavulanic acid:

Amoxicillin and clavulanic acid enter the breast milk in small amounts. These small amounts are not expected to cause side effects for most nursing infants. In a study of 67 breastfeeding infants, there were no serious side effects from this medication. Some babies had rash, diarrhea, irritability, or constipation, but these reactions did not last long. If you suspect the baby has any symptoms (such as rash or diarrhea), contact the child's healthcare provider. Be sure to talk to your healthcare provider about all your breastfeeding questions.

If a man takes amoxicillin and clavulanic acid, could it affect his fertility or increase the chance of birth defects?

One study reported that taking amoxicillin and clavulanic acid could treat bacterial infections found in semen, which might improve fertility (ability to make healthy sperm) in some men. Studies have not been done to see if amoxicillin and clavulanic acid could increase the chance of birth defects. In general, exposures that men 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.

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