Aripiprazole (Abilify®, Aristada®)

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

What is aripiprazole?

Aripiprazole is medication that has been used to treat schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, autism spectrum disorders, and depression. Some brand names for aripiprazole are Abilify® and Aristada®.

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.

For more information on depression, see the MotherToBaby fact sheet at https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/depression-pregnancy/.

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

Studies have not been done to see if taking aripiprazole can make it harder to get pregnant.

Does taking aripiprazole increase the chance of miscarriage?

Miscarriage is common and can occur in any pregnancy for many different reasons. It is not known if aripiprazole increases the chance of miscarriage. One study looking at the use of aripiprazole in pregnancy reported an increased chance of miscarriage, but other studies have not reported this finding. Some studies have reported a higher chance of miscarriage when depression is left untreated in pregnancy. As there can be many causes of miscarriage, it is hard to know if a medication, the medical condition being treated, or other factors (such as age, health, other exposures) are the cause of a miscarriage.

Does taking aripiprazole 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 aripiprazole, might increase the chance of birth defects in a pregnancy. Studies have not found a higher chance of birth defects when aripiprazole is taken during pregnancy.

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

It is not known if aripiprazole can cause other 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). Some studies have reported a slightly higher chance of preterm birth and babies born smaller than expected with the use of aripiprazole during pregnancy. However, the underlying illness being treated might also increase the chance of these pregnancy complications. Since aripiprazole was taken only for a short time in these studies, it is hard to know if the medication, the medical condition being treated, or other factors were the cause of the preterm births and smaller babies.

I need to take aripiprazole throughout my entire pregnancy. Will it cause withdrawal symptoms in my baby after birth?

The use of aripiprazole during pregnancy can cause temporary symptoms in newborns soon after birth. These symptoms are sometimes referred to as withdrawal. The symptoms can include jitteriness, breathing problems, shaking, sleepiness, eating problems, rigid muscles, or low muscle tone. In some babies the symptoms go away quickly on their own, while other babies might need medical treatment to help with the symptoms. Not all babies exposed to aripiprazole will have these symptoms. It is important that your healthcare providers know you are taking aripiprazole so that if symptoms occur your baby can get the care that is best for them.

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

It is not known if aripiprazole can increase the chance of behavior or learning issues for the child. However, the underlying illness being treated might affect a child's behavior or development.

Breastfeeding while taking aripiprazole:

A few studies looking at doses of aripiprazole up to 15mg per day have shown that the medication passes into breast milk in small amounts. While there have been reports of babies becoming sleepier than usual, most breastfed babies exposed to aripiprazole in the milk have no reported symptoms. If you suspect the baby has any symptoms (such as being too sleepy or having trouble eating), contact the child's healthcare provider.

Aripiprazole might lower the amount of milk your body makes. Be sure to talk to your healthcare provider about all your breastfeeding questions.

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

Studies have not been done to see if aripiprazole could affect a man's fertility (ability to get a woman pregnant) or 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.

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

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