



MotherToBaby

Medications & More During Pregnancy & Breastfeeding
Ask The Experts

Fact Sheet

by the **Organization of Teratology Information Specialists (OTIS)**

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Benzocaine

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

What is benzocaine?

Benzocaine is a topical local anesthetic. Local anesthetics are used to numb areas of the body for short periods of time. Benzocaine can be found in some over the counter pain relieving products.

Very little of benzocaine is likely to be absorbed across the skin. Since so little of the medication passes into the body, the amount that would reach a developing baby, if any, is unlikely to be a high amount.

Can benzocaine make it harder for me to get pregnant?

Studies have not been done to see if benzocaine use could make it harder for a woman to get pregnant.

Does taking benzocaine increase the chance for miscarriage?

Miscarriage can occur in any pregnancy. Studies have not been done to see if benzocaine increases the chance for a miscarriage.

Does taking benzocaine 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. Two reports did not find a greater chance for birth defects among 73 children whose mothers reported using benzocaine in the first trimester of pregnancy.

Since very little benzocaine is expected to be absorbed through the skin it is unlikely that a significant amount would even reach the baby. While there is not a lot of good research data, given the topical use of this medication it is unlikely that we would see an increased chance for birth defects if used as directed.

Could taking benzocaine in the second or third trimester cause other pregnancy complications?

This is not known as benzocaine has not been well studied for use during pregnancy.

Does exposure to benzocaine in pregnancy cause long-term problems in behavior or learning for the baby?

This is not known as benzocaine has not been well studied regarding long term outcomes.

Can I breastfeed while taking benzocaine?

Benzocaine has not been well studied for use during breastfeeding. However, as long as benzocaine is not applied to the breast or nipple so that a nursing child could not get it in their mouth, it should be okay to continue to breastfeed. Wash hands well after using benzocaine. Talk to your healthcare providers about all of your breastfeeding questions.

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

This has not been well studied. In general, exposures that fathers have are unlikely to increase risks to a pregnancy. For more information, please see the MotherToBaby fact sheet on Paternal Exposures at <https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/paternal-exposures-pregnancy/pdf/>.

Selected References:

- Berkovitch M, et al. 2002. Sore throat treatment during pregnancy: a prospective, controlled, pilot study. Clin Drug Invest 22(2):135-139.
- Heinonen OP, et al. 1977. Birth Defects and Drugs in Pregnancy. Publ Sci Group, Inc, Littleton, MA, 1977.

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