

# Benzocaine

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This sheet is about exposure to benzocaine in pregnancy and while breastfeeding. This information is based on available published literature. It 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 specific areas of the body for short periods of time. Benzocaine can be found in some over the counter pain relieving products, including Anbesol®, Orabase®, Orajel®, Hurricaine®, and Topex®.

Benzocaine has not been well-studied for use in pregnancy. When used as directed, very little benzocaine is expected to be absorbed. That means it is unlikely that a significant amount would reach the developing pregnancy, and that the chance of birth defects or other pregnancy complications is expected to be low.

## ***I use benzocaine. Can it make it harder for me to get pregnant?***

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

## ***Does using benzocaine 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 benzocaine increases the chance of miscarriage.

## ***Does using benzocaine increase the chance of birth defects?***

Every pregnancy starts out with a 3-5% chance of having a birth defect. This is called the background risk. Two reports did not find a greater chance of birth defects in the children of women who reported using benzocaine in the first trimester of pregnancy.

## ***Does using benzocaine in pregnancy increase the chance of other pregnancy-related problems?***

Studies have not been done to see if benzocaine increases the chance for 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).

## ***Does using benzocaine in pregnancy affect future behavior or learning for the child?***

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

## ***Breastfeeding while using benzocaine:***

Benzocaine has not been well-studied for use during breastfeeding. It is not recommended to apply benzocaine to the breasts or nipples because of the risk for methemoglobinemia (a serious blood disorder) if the baby ingests it. If benzocaine is not applied to these areas and the baby does not get it in their mouth, then use of topical benzocaine is unlikely to affect a breastfeeding child. Wash your hands well after using benzocaine. Be sure to talk to your healthcare provider about all your breastfeeding questions.

## ***If a male uses benzocaine, could it affect fertility or increase the chance of birth defects?***

Studies have not been done to see if benzocaine could affect male fertility (ability to get partner pregnant) or increase the chance of birth defects. In general, exposures that fathers or sperm donors 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/>.

**Questions? Call 866.626.6847 | Text 855.999.3525 | Email or Chat at [MotherToBaby.org](https://www.MotherToBaby.org).**

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