Bupropion (Wellbutrin®)

This sheet is about exposure to bupropion 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 is bupropion?

Bupropion is a medication that has been used to treat depression and seasonal affective disorders. Brand names of bupropion include Aplenzin®, Forfivo®, and Wellbutrin®. Bupropion is also sold under the brand name Zyban® as an aid to quit smoking.

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. Some women may have a return of their symptoms (relapse) if they stop this medication during pregnancy. 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 about depression, see the MotherToBaby fact sheet at https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/depression-pregnancy/.

Stopping this medication suddenly can cause some people to have withdrawal symptoms. It is not known if or how withdrawal might affect pregnancy. It is suggested that any reduction in bupropion be done slowly, and under the direction of your healthcare provider.

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

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

Does taking bupropion increase the chance of miscarriage?

Miscarriage is common and can occur in any pregnancy for many different reasons. Studies looking at bupropion and miscarriage are limited. One study found that the chance of miscarriage among women taking bupropion was similar to that among women taking other medications for depression. Some conditions treated with bupropion, such as depression and smoking, may increase the chance of miscarriage, which makes it hard to know what is causing this outcome.

Does taking bupropion 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 bupropion, might increase the chance of birth defects in a pregnancy.

Bupropion is not expected to increase the chance of birth defects in pregnancy. Two small studies suggested a possible link between taking bupropion in the first trimester and an increased chance of heart defects. However, these studies had limitations, so it is not known if the findings were due to bupropion or other factors. In contrast, studies of more than 2,000 pregnancies exposed to bupropion in the first trimester did not find an increased chance of birth defects, including heart defects.

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

Taking bupropion in pregnancy is not expected to increase the chance of other pregnancy-related problems, such as preterm delivery (birth before week 37 of pregnancy) or low birth weight (weighing less than 5 pounds, 8 ounces [2,500 grams] at birth).

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

The use of some antidepressants during pregnancy can cause temporary symptoms in newborns soon after birth. These symptoms are sometimes called withdrawal symptoms. They can include irritability, jitteriness, trouble sleeping, or trouble eating. Not all babies exposed to bupropion will have these symptoms. Two studies have suggested that the

chance of these symptoms in newborns may be lower with bupropion than with some other antidepressants. It is important that your healthcare providers know you are taking bupropion so that if symptoms occur, your baby can get the care that is best for them.

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

It is not known if taking bupropion during pregnancy can increase the chance of behavior or learning issues for the child. One small study suggested a possible link between bupropion exposure during pregnancy and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). However, the study did not account for other factors, such as a family history of ADHD, making it hard to know whether the findings were related to bupropion or other factors.

Breastfeeding while taking bupropion:

Bupropion passes into breast milk in small amounts. Most babies exposed to bupropion through breast milk are not expected to have side effects. There are two reports of seizures in 6-month-old babies exposed to bupropion through breast milk. In both cases, the seizures stopped after bupropion was no longer used. If you are taking bupropion while breastfeeding, watch your baby for unusual movements, seizures, or increased sleepiness, and contact your child's healthcare provider if you notice these symptoms. Be sure to talk with your healthcare provider about all your breastfeeding questions.

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

Studies have not been done to see if bupropion could affect male fertility (ability to make healthy sperm) or increase the chance of birth defects. Studies have shown that men with depression may have lower fertility. In general, exposures that fathers or sperm donors have are less likely 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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