

Capsaicin

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

What is capsaicin?

Capsaicin is the part of peppers (Solanaceae family, ***capsicum*** genus) that makes your mouth feel hot. Capsaicin has been generally recognized as safe (GRAS) by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for use in food and candy. It has been used in some cosmetics, and is the main ingredient in pepper spray used for defense.

Capsaicin has been used to treat pain in topical (applied to the skin) preparations and has been given as an injection in the foot to help treat pain from Morton's neuroma (a nerve condition of the foot). Some brand names for topical preparations include Capazasin®, Qutenza®, and Zostrix®.

Capsaicin has been sold in oral forms (such as pills and capsules) as an herbal supplement. The use of herbal products is generally not recommended during pregnancy unless under the direction and care of your healthcare provider to treat a medical condition. For more information about herbal products, please see our fact sheet at <https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/herbal-products-pregnancy/>.

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

Studies have not been done in humans to see if using capsaicin would make it harder to get pregnant. Animal studies did not report that capsaicin affected female fertility.

Does taking capsaicin increase the chance for miscarriage?

Miscarriage is common and can occur in any pregnancy for many different reasons. Studies have not been done to see if capsaicin increases the chance for miscarriage.

Does taking capsaicin 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. Studies have not been done in humans to see if capsaicin increases the chance for birth defects above the background risk. Animal studies do not suggest that capsaicin would increase the chance for birth defects.

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

Studies have not been done in humans to see if capsaicin 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).

One animal study suggested that capsaicin might affect growth of the developing pregnancy.

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

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

Breastfeeding while taking capsaicin:

Capsaicin has not been studied for use while breastfeeding. There is a report of two breastfed infants who developed skin rashes when they nursed 12 and 15 hours after the person who was breastfeeding ate foods that were flavored with red pepper. The skin reactions in the nursing infants slowly went away over a period of several days. If you suspect the baby has any symptoms, such as a rash, contact the child's healthcare provider. Be sure to talk to your healthcare provider about all of your breastfeeding questions.

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

Studies have not been done in humans to see if capsaicin could affect male fertility or increase the chance of birth

defects above the background risk. Animal studies have not suggested that capsaicin could affect male fertility. In general, exposures that fathers or sperm donors have are unlikely to increase the 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](https://mothertobaby.org).

Disclaimer: MotherToBaby Fact Sheets are meant for general information purposes and should not replace the advice of your health care provider. MotherToBaby is a service of the non-profit Organization of Teratology Information Specialists (OTIS). *OTIS/MotherToBaby encourages inclusive and person-centered language. While our name still contains a reference to mothers, we are updating our resources with more inclusive terms. Use of the term mother or maternal refers to a person who is pregnant. Use of the term father or paternal refers to a person who contributes sperm.* Copyright by OTIS, April 1, 2022.