

Capsaicin

This sheet talks 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 make your mouth feel hot. Capsaicin is generally recognized as safe by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for use in food and candy. Capsaicin is also the main ingredient in pepper spray used for defense.

Capsaicin has been used in over the counter and prescription topical (applied to the skin) preparations such as lotions, creams, or patches to help treat pain. It has also 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 include: Capazasin®, Qutenza®, and Renzil®, Zostrix®.

Capsaicin has also been sold in oral forms (pills, capsules, etc.) as an herbal supplement. Unless your healthcare provider has recommended that you take them, herbal supplements should be avoided in pregnancy. For more information, please see the MotherToBaby fact sheet on herbal products at <https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/herbal-products-pregnancy/pdf/>. Capsaicin has also been used in some cosmetics.

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

Animal studies, where exposure levels were higher than with typical topical use in humans, did not find that capsaicin affected the fertility cycle of females, meaning ovulation still occurred. Studies have not been done to see if using capsaicin would make it harder to get pregnant.

I just found out I am pregnant. Should I stop using capsaicin?

Talk with your healthcare providers before making any changes to how you use capsaicin.

Does using capsaicin increase the chance for miscarriage?

Miscarriage can occur in any pregnancy. Based on the data available, it is not known if capsaicin increases the chance for miscarriage.

Does using 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. Animal studies do not suggest that capsaicin would increase the chance for birth defects. There is not enough human data available to understand if capsaicin could increase the chance for birth defects.

Could using capsaicin cause other pregnancy complications?

One animal study found that injecting capsaicin into the mother might affect growth of the developing baby. Studies have not been done in humans. Based on the data available, it is not known if capsaicin increases the chance for other pregnancy complications.

Does using capsaicin in pregnancy cause long-term problems in behavior or learning for the baby?

Based on the data available, it is not known if capsaicin increases the chance for long-term health concerns.

Can I breastfeed while using capsaicin?

Capsaicin has not been studied for use while breastfeeding. There is a case report on 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. Their skin reactions in the nursing infants slowly went away over a period of several days. Be sure to talk to your healthcare provider about all your breastfeeding questions.

I take capsaicin. Can it make it harder for me to get my partner pregnant or increase the chance of birth

defects?

Animal studies have not suggested that capsaicin could affect fertility. 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/pdf/>.

Please click [here](#) for references.

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

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