

Cephalexin (Keflex® , Keftab®)

This sheet is about exposure to cephalexin 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 cephalexin?

Cephalexin is an antibiotic medication that has been used to treat infections such as Staphylococcus aureus (Staph) and Escherichia coli (**E. coli**). Some brand names for cephalexin are Keflex® and Keftab®.

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. Your healthcare providers can talk with you about the benefits of treating your condition and the risks of untreated illness during pregnancy.

Having certain infections (such as a Staph or **E. coli** infection) during pregnancy can increase the chance of pregnancy-related problems or infections in a newborn baby. MotherToBaby has fact sheets on Staph and **E. coli** infections here: <https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/staphylococcus-aureus-pregnancy/> and <https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/e-coli-pregnancy/>.

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

Studies have not been done in women to see if cephalexin can make it harder to get pregnant. In animal studies, cephalexin did not affect fertility (ability to get pregnant).

Does taking cephalexin increase the chance of miscarriage?

Miscarriage is common and can occur in any pregnancy for many different reasons. In a study of 262 women who took cephalexin during pregnancy, there was no increase in miscarriages compared to a similar group of women who did not take cephalexin.

Does taking cephalexin 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. Information on the use of cephalexin in pregnancy is limited. In a study of 262 women who took cephalexin during pregnancy, there was no increased chance of birth defects.

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

Studies have not been done to see if cephalexin can increase the chance of 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 taking cephalexin in pregnancy affect future behavior or learning for the child?

Studies have not been done to see if cephalexin can increase the chance of behavior or learning issues for the child.

Breastfeeding while taking cephalexin:

Cephalexin gets into breast milk in small amounts. In reports of 20 babies exposed to cephalexin through breast milk, 4 had diarrhea. There is one report of a baby getting a rash after being breastfed, due to a sensitivity to cephalexin. If you suspect the baby has any symptoms (such as diarrhea or rash), contact the child's healthcare provider. Be sure to talk to your healthcare provider about all your breastfeeding questions.

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

Studies have not been done to see if cephalexin could affect a man's fertility (ability to get a woman pregnant) or increase the chance of birth defects. Some infections, such as Staph or **E.coli**, might affect a man's 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/>.

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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