

# Clindamycin

---

This sheet is about exposure to clindamycin in pregnancy and while breastfeeding. This information is based on available published research. It should not take the place of medical care and advice from your healthcare provider.

## ***What is clindamycin?***

Clindamycin is an antibiotic that has been used to treat or prevent bacterial infections. It can be taken by mouth (oral), used on the skin (topical), or given by IV (intravenous or by needle into a vein).

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.

## ***I take clindamycin. Can it make it harder for me to get pregnant?***

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

## ***Does taking clindamycin increase the chance for miscarriage?***

Miscarriage is common and can occur in any pregnancy for many different reasons. One study involving 249 women who had a vaginal bacterial infection found that clindamycin treatment lowered the chances of late miscarriage.

## ***Does taking clindamycin increase the chance of birth defects?***

Every pregnancy starts out with about a 1 in 33 (3%) chance of having a birth defect. This is called the background chance. It is unlikely that using clindamycin will increase the chance of birth defects. Several human studies as well as animal studies have not shown an increased chance of birth defects.

When clindamycin is used on the skin (topical use), only small amounts pass through skin and get into the bloodstream. This means a pregnancy would be exposed to only a very small amount of the medicine. Since available information about vaginal and oral clindamycin (both higher absorptions compared to topical use) does not find an increased chance of birth defects, it is also unlikely that using topical clindamycin increases the chance of birth defects.

## ***Does taking clindamycin in pregnancy increase the chance of other pregnancy-related problems?***

Several studies have not found an increased chance of other pregnancy-related problems such as low birth weight (weighing less than 5 pounds, 8 ounces [2500 grams] at birth). One study involving 249 women who had a vaginal bacterial infection found that clindamycin treatment reduced the chances of preterm delivery (birth before week 37).

## ***Does taking clindamycin in pregnancy affect future behavior or learning for the child?***

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

## ***Breastfeeding while taking clindamycin:***

Clindamycin gets into breastmilk in small amounts when women are given clindamycin orally (by mouth) or intravenously (IV). In those situations, clindamycin might cause some gastrointestinal (GI) effects in a breastfeeding (e.g. nausea, diarrhea, stomach pain, vomiting, diaper rash, thrush, or rarely bloody stools). Topical application (to the skin) has minimal absorption into the body and are unlikely to end up in breast milk in amounts that might cause side effects in a nursing baby. If you notice any symptoms in your child, contact their healthcare provider. Be sure to talk to your healthcare provider about all of your breastfeeding questions.

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

Studies have not been done to see if clindamycin could affect men's fertility (ability to get a woman 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/>.

**Please click [here](#) to view 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). Copyright by OTIS, October 1, 2023.