Clindamycin

This sheet is about exposure to clindamycin 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 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), applied to the skin (topical), used vaginally (as a cream, gel, or suppository), 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. Treating infections during pregnancy is important. Some infections, such as bacterial vaginosis (BV), can increase the chance of pregnancy-related problems, such as miscarriage and preterm delivery (birth before week 37). 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?

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

Does taking clindamycin increase the chance of miscarriage?

Miscarriage is common and can occur in any pregnancy for many different reasons. Studies of pregnant women treated for vaginal bacterial infections show that taking clindamycin by mouth or vaginally does not increase the risk of miscarriage and may even lower the risk of late miscarriage by treating the infection. Using topical clindamycin is also unlikely to increase the chance of miscarriage.

Does taking clindamycin 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 clindamycin, might increase the chance of birth defects in a pregnancy. Available pregnancy studies have not shown an increased chance of birth defects when clindamycin is taken orally or intravaginally. It is unlikely that using topical clindamycin would increase the chance of birth defects.

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

Several studies have not found an increased chance of pregnancy-related problems such as low birth weight (weighing less than 5 pounds, 8 ounces [2,500 grams] at birth). Studies of pregnant women treated for vaginal bacterial infections have found that oral or intravaginal clindamycin treatment either did not increase the chance of preterm delivery (birth before week 37) or lowered the chance for preterm delivery (possibly by treating the infection). It is unlikely that using topical clindamycin would increase the chance of low birth weight or preterm delivery.

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:

When taken by mouth or through an IV, only a small amount of clindamycin passes into breast milk. Babies sometimes receive clindamycin directly to treat infections, so a nursing infant would get much less from breast milk than from a direct dose. Because the amount of clindamycin in breast milk is low, side effects are unlikely for most babies. Watch the baby for any stomach issues, like diarrhea or diaper rash, and contact their healthcare provider if you notice anything. Very little clindamycin applied to the skin or used vaginally is absorbed into the body, so it is unlikely to reach breast milk in amounts that could affect a nursing baby.

There are no specific studies on clindamycin and breastfeeding. One report described a newborn with two bloody

stools while both the baby and mother were taking multiple antibiotics. It is unclear what role, if any, clindamycin in breast milk played. Be sure to talk to your healthcare provider about all your breastfeeding questions.

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

Studies have not been done to see if clindamycin could affect men's fertility (ability to make healthy sperm) or increase the chance of birth defects. 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 to view references.

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