



MotherToBaby

Medications & More During Pregnancy & Breastfeeding  
Ask The Experts

Fact Sheet

by the **Organization of Teratology Information Specialists (OTIS)**

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## Clindamycin

In every pregnancy, a woman starts out with a 3-5% chance of having a baby with a birth defect. This is called her background risk. This sheet talks about whether exposure to clindamycin may increase the risk for birth defects over that background risk. This information should not take the place of medical care and advice from your health care provider.

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

Clindamycin is an antibiotic. It can be taken by mouth (oral) or, used on the skin (topical) or, by intravenous (“I.V.”, or given by needle) to treat or prevent bacterial infections.

### ***Can clindamycin use during the first trimester cause a miscarriage?***

There are no studies that look to see if clindamycin could cause a miscarriage.

### ***I am pregnant; can taking clindamycin in my first trimester cause a birth defect?***

It is unlikely. Two human studies and several animal studies have suggested that taking clindamycin would not increase the chance of birth defects. One study looking at prescription records reported a slightly higher chance for birth defects among 380 women who filled a prescription for clindamycin in their first trimester. However, this study cannot confirm that these women actually took their medication once they picked up the prescription.

### ***Can taking clindamycin in my 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> trimester cause other pregnancy complications?***

It is unlikely. Several studies on clindamycin have not found an increased chance for pregnancy complications. In addition, a study on 249 pregnant women with vaginosis (high levels of bacteria in the vagina) who were treated with clindamycin in their second trimester reported that treatment appeared to lower the chance of a late miscarriage (between 14 and 20 weeks) and preterm birth (less than 37 weeks).

### ***What if I am just putting clindamycin on my face for acne treatment?***

When clindamycin is used on the skin (topical), only small amounts pass through skin and get into the blood stream. This means a pregnancy would only be exposed to a very small amount of the medicine used. Since available information with vaginal and oral forms (both higher absorptions compared to topical) do not find increased chances of pregnancy complications, use of topical treatment on the face is also unlikely to increase the chance of pregnancy problems.

### ***I am breastfeeding. Can I take clindamycin?***

Yes. Based on a small number of women given clindamycin orally (by mouth) or intravenously (I.V.), the amount of clindamycin that is found in breast milk is small. Clindamycin might cause some gastrointestinal (GI) effects in a breastfeeding baby that would be similar to those seen in adults (e.g. nausea, diarrhea, stomach pain, vomiting, diaper rash, thrush). If you notice any symptoms in your child, contact their healthcare provider. Be sure to talk to your health care provider about all of your breastfeeding questions.

### ***What if the father of the baby takes clindamycin?***

There are no studies looking at possible risks to a pregnancy when a father uses clindamycin. In general, exposures that fathers have are unlikely to increase risks to a pregnancy. For more information, please see the MotherToBaby fact sheet Paternal Exposures and Pregnancy at <https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/paternal-exposures-pregnancy/pdf/>.

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