



MotherToBaby

Medications & More During Pregnancy & Breastfeeding
Ask The Experts

Fact Sheet

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

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Clonazepam

This sheet talks about exposure to clonazepam in pregnancy and while breastfeeding. This information should not take the place of medical care and advice from your healthcare provider.

What is clonazepam?

Clonazepam belongs to a class of medications called benzodiazepines. Clonazepam is commonly used to treat seizures, anxiety, panic attacks, and insomnia. A common brand name is Klonopin®.

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

There are currently no studies that have looked at whether taking clonazepam may make it more difficult for a woman to become pregnant.

I just found out I am pregnant. Should I stop taking clonazepam?

Talk with your health care provider before making any changes to this medication. Women who suddenly stop taking clonazepam (quitting “cold turkey”) may have withdrawal symptoms. We do not know what effects withdrawal would have on a pregnancy. If you choose to stop taking clonazepam while pregnant, it is important to slowly wean off the medication, under the direction of your healthcare provider.

For some women, the benefits of staying on clonazepam during pregnancy may outweigh any potential risk. Your healthcare provider can help you decide if you should continue taking clonazepam while pregnant.

Does taking clonazepam increase the chance for miscarriage?

Miscarriage can occur in any pregnancy. One study found that women who were taking more than 4 mg/day of clonazepam had a slightly higher chance of miscarriage. More research is needed to determine if the increased risk seen in this study is actually the result of the high dose taken by these women, more related to the mother’s underlying health condition, or due to chance.

Does taking clonazepam increase the chance of having a baby with a birth defect?

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. There are a small number of studies of women taking clonazepam-only during pregnancy. These studies have not found an increased chance for birth defects when a woman takes clonazepam alone during the first trimester of pregnancy.

Pregnant women who take clonazepam in combination with another anticonvulsant medications to control seizures might have a higher chance for birth defects.

Can clonazepam cause other pregnancy complications?

Two studies found that babies exposed to clonazepam during pregnancy might be more likely to be born preterm (before 37 weeks) or with low birth weight. Because these studies relied on prescription records, we do not know if the women actually took the medication. Additionally, the pregnancy complications seen in these studies may be more related to the mother’s underlying health condition, such as anxiety.

I need to take clonazepam throughout my entire pregnancy. Will it cause withdrawal symptoms in my baby after birth?

Some babies born to women who take this medication at the end of their pregnancy may have more trouble breathing, poor circulation, and low muscle tone (floppy baby syndrome). Not every baby exposed to clonazepam will

experience these symptoms. It is important to let your health care provider and the baby's healthcare provider know that you are taking clonazepam, so they can be prepared to monitor the baby closely at the time of delivery. If a baby experiences symptoms, he or she may need to spend some additional time in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU).

Will taking clonazepam during pregnancy affect my baby's behavior or cause learning problems?

One study of 269 children did not find a higher chance of autism in children whose mothers took clonazepam as their only seizure medication.

Can I breastfeed my baby if I am taking clonazepam?

Clonazepam gets into the breast milk in small amounts. Because it can cause sedation (sleepiness) and may build up in the infant's body, other medications may be preferred while breastfeeding a newborn. If a mother must use clonazepam, the breastfed baby should be monitored closely for sedation (sleepiness). If excessive sedation occurs, immediately contact the baby's pediatrician who may want to do blood work to see how much clonazepam the baby is being exposed to. Be sure to talk to your health care provider about all of your breastfeeding questions.

What if the baby's father takes clonazepam?

There are no studies looking at possible risks to a pregnancy when a father takes clonazepam. 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/>.

Please click here for references.

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