



MotherToBaby

Medications & More During Pregnancy & Breastfeeding
Ask The Experts

Fact Sheet

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

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Clonidine

This sheet talks about whether exposure to clonidine might increase the risk for birth defects. This information should not take the place of medical care and advice from your healthcare provider.

What is clonidine?

Clonidine is a medication used to treat high blood pressure, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and in some cases bipolar disorder or pain. Some brand names include Catapres®, Duraclon® and Kapvay®. Clonidine is sometimes used in combination with other medication for the management of opioid withdrawal.

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

Studies have not been done to see if clonidine could make it harder for a woman to get pregnant.

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

Talk with your healthcare providers before making any changes to your prescription medication. For some women the benefits of staying on this medication during pregnancy may outweigh the potential risks.

Does taking clonidine increase the chance for miscarriage?

Miscarriage can occur in any pregnancy. Studies have not been done to see if clonidine can increase the chance for miscarriage.

Does taking clonidine 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. Clonidine has not been well studied, but given the current available data, it is unlikely that first trimester use of clonidine would significantly increase the chance of a birth defect.

Does taking clonidine increase the chance of pregnancy complications?

There is one report that shows that clonidine use may lead to a slower heart rate in mom leading to a lower birth weight in the baby. In the cases where the woman was using clonidine to treat high blood pressure, her blood pressure may have played a role in the reduced weight of the baby. There have been some reports of babies being born with low blood pressure if their mother was using clonidine near the time of delivery. This effect was temporary. Not all babies will have this problem. High blood pressure has also been reported in 4 babies perhaps related to withdrawal.

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

Probably not. One report found a higher rate of sleep problems in children exposed to clonidine during pregnancy. This same behavior has been seen in animal studies. However, other studies have reported that the use of clonidine later in pregnancy does not cause other adverse effects on the baby.

Can I breastfeed my baby if I am taking clonidine?

Clonidine can be found in breastmilk. Taking clonidine may reduce milk supply. There is a report of one newborn baby who was drowsy, floppy (poor muscle control), and had periods of not breathing and possible seizure activity. These symptoms started soon after delivery and went away when breastfeeding was stopped, days after birth. It is not known if the symptoms were due to pregnancy exposure to clonidine, breastfeeding while taking clonidine, or other reasons. There are 10 other reports of babies who were breastfed while mom was taking clonidine that did not have reported side effects. If you take clonidine and breastfeed, talk with your child's healthcare provider to see if any

special follow up is needed. Talk to your healthcare provider about all of your breastfeeding questions.

What if the baby's father takes clonidine?

Impotence (a form of erectile dysfunction) has been reported in some men with high blood pressure being treated with clonidine. If a man experiences this issue, he may have more trouble getting his partner pregnant. 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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