Clonidine

This sheet talks about exposure to clonidine in a pregnancy and while breastfeeding. 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?
Based on the data available, it is not known if clonidine can make it harder to become pregnant.

I just found out I am pregnant. Should I stop taking clonidine?
Talk with your healthcare providers before making any changes to how you take your medication(s). For some people 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. Based on the data available, it is not known if clonidine increases the chance for miscarriage.

Does taking clonidine increase the chance of having a baby with a birth defect?
Every pregnancy starts out with a 3-5% chance of having a birth defect. This is called the background risk. Based on the data available, it is unlikely that use of clonidine would greatly increase the chance of a birth defect.

Could taking clonidine cause other pregnancy complications?
There is one report that suggests that clonidine use may lead to a slower heart rate in the person who is pregnant, leading to a lower birth weight in the baby. In the cases where clonidine was being used to treat high blood pressure, the blood pressure issues may have played a role in the reduced weight of the baby. There have also been some reports of babies being born with low blood pressure if clonidine was being used 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, which could possibly be related to withdrawal.

Does taking clonidine in pregnancy cause long-term problems in behavior or learning for the baby?
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 while 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 exposed to clonidine through breast milk that did not have reported side effects. Talk with your child’s healthcare provider to see if any special follow up is needed and about all of your breastfeeding questions.

I take clonidine. Can it make it harder for me to get my partner pregnant or increase the chance of birth defects?
Impotence (a form of erectile dysfunction) has been reported in some men with high blood pressure being treated with clonidine. Those who experience this issue may have more trouble getting their partner pregnant. 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/pdf/.

Please click here for references.