Dextromethorphan

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

What is dextromethorphan?
Dextromethorphan is an over-the-counter cold medication that is used to treat cough. Dextromethorphan is available in pill, liquid and cough drop forms. It can be purchased on its own and is also found as an ingredient in multi-symptom cold, cough, and flu medications.

During pregnancy and while breastfeeding, it’s best to avoid combination medications that contain multiple ingredients to tackle many symptoms. Instead, choose single medications that treat only the symptoms you currently have. Some cold and cough medications contain alcohol. If you need to take dextromethorphan during pregnancy choose a product that does not contain alcohol.

I take dextromethorphan. Can it make it harder for me to become pregnant?
Studies have not been done to see if dextromethorphan could make it harder for a woman to get pregnant.

I just found out I am pregnant. Should I stop taking dextromethorphan?
Talk with your healthcare provider about your symptoms and the medications you are taking. They can discuss the benefits of treating your condition versus any concern with this medication.

Does taking dextromethorphan increase the chance of miscarriage?
Miscarriage can occur in any pregnancy. Studies on women have not been done to see if taking dextromethorphan could increase the chance for a miscarriage.

Does taking dextromethorphan increase the chance of birth defects?
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. Most studies do not suggest that the use of dextromethorphan increases this chance of birth defects.

Does taking dextromethorphan in pregnancy cause long-term problems in behavior or learning for the baby?
Studies on women have not yet been done to see if taking dextromethorphan would increase the chance for long-term problems in behavior or learning.

Can I breastfeed while taking dextromethorphan?
There are no studies about the use of dextromethorphan during breastfeeding. Talk to your healthcare provider about all of your breastfeeding questions.

If a man takes dextromethorphan, could it affect his fertility (ability to get partner pregnant) or increase chance of birth defects?
Possible effects on sperm have not been well studied in men. 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 at https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/paternal-exposures-pregnancy/pdf/.

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