



MotherToBaby

Medications & More During Pregnancy & Breastfeeding
Ask The Experts

Fact Sheet

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

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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.

Can taking dextromethorphan interfere with my ability to get pregnant?

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

Can taking dextromethorphan increase the chance of miscarriage?

Studies on women have not been done to see if taking dextromethorphan could increase the chance for a miscarriage.

Can 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. It can be used during all stages of pregnancy.

Could dextromethorphan cause other pregnancy complications?

Studies on women have not yet been done to see if taking dextromethorphan would increase the chance for other pregnancy complications.

Can I take dextromethorphan while I am breastfeeding?

There are no studies about the use of dextromethorphan during breastfeeding. Be sure to talk to your healthcare provider about all of your breastfeeding questions.

What if the father of the baby takes dextromethorphan?

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 and Pregnancy at <https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/paternal-exposures-pregnancy/pdf/>.

Selected References:

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