Formoterol (Foradil®)

This sheet is about exposure to formoterol in pregnancy and while breastfeeding. This information is based on published research studies. It should not take the place of medical care and advice from your healthcare provider.

What is formoterol?

Formoterol (also called eformoterol) is a medication that has been used to treat asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). It is in a class of medications called long-acting beta2-agonists (LABAs). LABAs are bronchodilators. Bronchodilators relax the muscles in the lungs, making it easier to breathe. Formoterol is taken by inhalation (breathing in). Some brand names of formoterol are Foradil® and Perforomist®.

Formoterol combined with corticosteroids are sold under the brand names Symbicort® and Dulera®.

MotherToBaby has a fact sheet on corticosteroids here:
https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/inhaled-corticosteroids-icss-pregnancy/.

Sometimes when women find out they are pregnant, they think about changing how they take their medication, or stopping their medication altogether. However, it is important to talk with your healthcare providers before making any changes to how you take your medication. Your healthcare providers can talk with you about the benefits of treating your condition and the risks of untreated illness during pregnancy. When asthma is not well-controlled, it can increase risks to a pregnancy. MotherToBaby has a fact sheet on asthma here:
https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/asthma-and-pregnancy/.

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

Studies have not been done to see if taking formoterol can make it harder to get pregnant.

Does taking formoterol increase the chance of miscarriage?

Miscarriage is common and can occur in any pregnancy for many different reasons. In one study of 53 pregnancies exposed to formoterol and similar medications, an increased chance of miscarriage was not reported.

Does taking formoterol increase the chance of birth defects?

Birth defects can happen in any pregnancy for different reasons. Out of all babies born each year, about 3 out of 100 (3%) will have a birth defect. We look at research studies to try to understand if an exposure, like formoterol, might increase the chance of birth defects in a pregnancy. Animal studies and limited human studies do not suggest an increased chance of birth defects with the use of formoterol during pregnancy.

A study on the use of LABAs as a group reported an increased chance of heart defects when used in the first trimester. However, it is not known if the medication, the condition being treated, or other factors caused the reported birth defects. In another study of 53 pregnancies exposed to formoterol, no increased chance of birth defects was reported.

Does taking formoterol in pregnancy increase the chance of other pregnancy-related problems?

It is not known if formoterol might increase the chance of other pregnancy-related problems, such as preterm delivery (birth before week 37) or low birth weight (weighing less than 5 pounds, 8 ounces [2500 grams] at birth). In 1 report with 33 women who took formoterol during pregnancy, 5 infants were reported to be delivered preterm. Another study, which compared 162 pregnancies exposed to formoterol with those exposed to another LABA, found no differences in birth weight, size of the infants, or the chance of preterm delivery.

When asthma is not well-controlled during pregnancy, it has been associated with higher rates of pregnancy complications such as preterm delivery and low birth weight.

Does taking formoterol in pregnancy affect future behavior or learning for the child?

Studies have not been done to see if formoterol can increase the chance of behavior or learning issues for the child.

Breastfeeding while taking formoterol:

There are no studies on the use of formoterol while breastfeeding. Information on a similar medication suggests that inhaled formoterol would be unlikely to pass into the breast milk in large amounts. Inhaled bronchodilators are generally considered acceptable for use during breastfeeding. Be sure to talk to your healthcare provider about all your breastfeeding questions.

If a man takes formoterol, could it affect fertility or increase the chance of birth defects?

Studies have not been done to see if formoterol could affect men's fertility (ability to make healthy sperm) or increase the chance of birth defects. In general, exposures that men 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/.

Please click here for references.

Questions? Call 866.626.6847 | Text 855.999.3525 | Email or Chat at MotherToBaby.org.

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