# Guaifenesin

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

## *What is guaifenesin?*

Guaifenesin is an expectorant. Expectorants are used to thin and loosen mucus in the throat and lungs. This makes it easier to cough up and remove the mucus from the body. Guaifenesin can be found in many different products. A common brand name is Mucinex®. Guaifenesin is also found in combination with other medication in over-the-counter cough and cold preparations.

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 this medication. Your healthcare providers can talk with you about the benefits of treating your condition and the risks of untreated illness during pregnancy.

## *I take guaifenesin. Can it make it harder for me to get pregnant?*

Based on the studies reviewed, guaifenesin is not expected to make it harder to get pregnant.

## *Does taking guaifenesin increase the chance of miscarriage?*

Miscarriage is common and can occur in any pregnancy for many different reasons. It is not known if guaifenesin increases the chance of miscarriage.

## *Does taking guaifenesin 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 guaifenesin, might increase the chance of birth defects in a pregnancy.

Guaifenesin is not expected to greatly increase the chance of birth defects. There are a few studies that suggest an increased chance of some birth defects. However, most available information suggests that if guaifenesin does increase the chance of birth defects, that increase is expected to be low.

## *Does taking guaifenesin in pregnancy increase the chance of other pregnancy-related problems?*

Studies have not been done to see if guaifenesin can increase the chance for 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.

## *Does taking guaifenesin in pregnancy affect future behavior or learning for the child?*

Studies have not been done to see if guaifenesin can cause behavior or learning issues for the child.

## *Breastfeeding while taking guaifenesin:*

The use of guaifenesin while breastfeeding has not been studied. It is not known if guaifenesin passes into breastmilk or what effect (if any) it could have on a child that is nursing. According to the product label, when used as directed, guaifenesin is not expected to cause side effects in a child that is nursing. If a product containing guaifenesin is used during pregnancy or breastfeeding, it should be alcohol-free. Be sure to talk to your healthcare provider about all your breastfeeding questions.

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

It is not known if guaifenesin could affect a man’s fertility (ability to get a woman pregnant) or increase the chance of birth defects above the background risk. There is a case report in which improvement in sperm count and movement (motility) was noted after treatment with guaifenesin. 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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