



MotherToBaby

Medications & More During Pregnancy & Breastfeeding
Ask The Experts

Fact Sheet

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

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Lidocaine

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

What is lidocaine?

Lidocaine is a local anesthetic. Local anesthetics are used to numb areas of the body for short periods of time. Lidocaine has been used as an injection (given by shot), intravenously (by I.V.) and topically (rubbed on the body). Lidocaine can be found in some over the counter pain relieving creams and patches. Lidocaine has also been used to treat ventricular arrhythmia (abnormal heart rhythm).

Lidocaine is also found in a topical cream called EMLA®. EMLA® cream also contains the medication prilocaine. For more information on prilocaine, please see the MotherToBaby fact sheet at: <https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/prilocaine>.

Can lidocaine make it harder for me to get pregnant?

Studies have not been done to see if lidocaine could make it harder for a woman to get pregnant. An experimental animal study did not find that lidocaine would affect fertility (ability to get pregnant).

Does taking lidocaine increase the chance for miscarriage?

Miscarriage can occur in any pregnancy. Studies have not been done to see if lidocaine increases the chance for a miscarriage.

Does taking lidocaine in the first trimester 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. Human case reports and experimental animal studies do not suggest that lidocaine would significantly increase the chance of birth defects.

Could taking lidocaine in the second or third trimester cause other pregnancy complications?

There are a few case reports of side effects in newborns of mothers who received lidocaine at the time of delivery. The infants in these case reports needed treatment for symptoms that included low muscle tone (“floppy”), dilated pupils, difficulty breathing, apnea, and/or seizures. There are also case reports without health concerns in the newborn when lidocaine was used at the time of delivery.

Does exposure to lidocaine in pregnancy cause long-term problems in behavior or learning for the baby?

This is not known as lidocaine has not been well studied regarding long term outcomes.

Can I breastfeed while taking lidocaine?

Yes. Lidocaine can get into breastmilk at low levels. However, it is not well absorbed by the nursing child. Breastfeeding after receiving lidocaine is unlikely to cause problems for a nursing child. Be sure to talk to your healthcare provider about all your breastfeeding questions.

If a man takes lidocaine, could it affect his fertility (ability to get partner pregnant) or increase the chance of birth defects?

This has not been well studied. In general, exposures that fathers have are unlikely to increase risks to a pregnancy. For more information, please see the MotherToBaby fact sheet on Paternal Exposures and Pregnancy at <https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/paternal-exposures-pregnancy/pdf>.

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