Lorazepam

This sheet is about exposure to lorazepam 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 providers.

What is lorazepam?

Lorazepam is a medication that has been used to treat anxiety and insomnia (trouble falling and/or staying asleep). It has also been used to treat seizures and alcohol withdrawal syndrome. Some brand names for lorazepam are Alzapam®, Ativan®, Loram®, Loraz®, and Loreev®. Lorazepam belongs to the class of medication called benzodiazepines.

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. Studies have shown that when anxiety is left untreated during pregnancy, there can be a higher chance for pregnancy complications such as preterm delivery and/or low birth weight. MotherToBaby has a fact sheet on anxiety at https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/anxiety-fact/.

Some women have physical symptoms (called withdrawal) when they suddenly stop taking lorazepam. It is not known if or how withdrawal might affect a pregnancy. Your healthcare providers can talk with you about the benefits of treating your condition and the risks of untreated illness during pregnancy.

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

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

Does taking lorazepam increase the chance of miscarriage?

Miscarriage is common and can occur in any pregnancy for many different reasons. It is not known if lorazepam could increase the chance of miscarriage. Some studies looking at benzodiazepines as a group suggest an increased chance of miscarriage. Because miscarriage can happen for many reasons, it is hard to know if a medication, the medical condition being treated, other health factors or age are the cause.

Does taking lorazepam 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 lorazepam, might increase the chance of birth defects in a pregnancy.

It is unlikely that lorazepam significantly increases the chance of birth defects. One study found a possible association with anal atresia (bottom of the intestinal tract is closed off), and another study found an increased chance of pulmonary valve stenosis (abnormal development of the baby's heart). However, other studies did not find an increased chance of birth defects with the use of lorazepam.

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

Some studies have suggested a higher chance of preterm delivery (birth before week 37) and low birth weight (weighing less than 5 pounds, 8 ounces [2500 grams] at birth) in infants that were exposed to lorazepam in the second half of pregnancy. However, not all studies found a higher chance for these pregnancy-related complications. It is possible that other factors, not lorazepam, caused these complications.

I need to take lorazepam during my pregnancy. Will it cause withdrawal symptoms in my baby after birth?

The use of lorazepam during pregnancy can cause temporary symptoms in newborns soon after birth. These symptoms are sometimes referred to as withdrawal. Symptoms can include irritability, crying, sleep disturbances, tremors, jitteriness, trouble breathing, or muscle weakness. Not all babies exposed to lorazepam will have these symptoms. If symptoms develop, they usually go away within a few weeks and are not known to have any long-term

effects for the baby. It is important that your healthcare providers know you are taking lorazepam so that if symptoms occur, your baby can get the care that is best for them.

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

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

Breastfeeding while taking lorazepam:

Lorazepam gets into breast milk in small amounts. No side effects were found in studies of children exposed through breast milk. If you suspect the baby has any symptoms (being too sleepy, slower breathing rate, poor feeding, or poor weight gain), contact the child's healthcare provider. Be sure to talk to your healthcare provider about all your breastfeeding questions.

If a man takes lorazepam, can it affect his fertility or increase the chance of birth defects?

When a male takes lorazepam, it is not expected to affect 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 on 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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