MDMA (Molly, Ecstasy)

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

What Is MDMA?

MDMA is short for 3,4 methylenedioxymethamphetamine. This is a man-made drug that causes people who use it to experience psychedelic and hallucinogenic effects, meaning they see or hear things that are not really there. Common or street names for MDMA are Molly, ecstasy, E, X, XTC, and Mandy. MDMA can be swallowed as a pill or capsule or snorted/inhaled as a powder.

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

Studies have not been done to see if MDMA use could make it harder for a person to get pregnant.

I just found out that I am pregnant. Should I stop taking MDMA?

Treatment is available to help you stop using MDMA. Talk to your healthcare provider as soon as possible so that you can start treatment. If you do not have a healthcare provider, call the national number for drug treatment referral at 800-662-4357. When you call for help, let them know that you are pregnant so that you can get routed to the best facility to meet your needs.

Does taking MDMA increase the chance for miscarriage?

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

Does taking MDMA increase the chance of birth defects?

Every pregnancy starts out with a 3-5% chance of having a birth defect. This is called the background risk. It is unclear if MDMA use during pregnancy increases the chance for birth defects. There is very little published data on MDMA use during pregnancy. One small study in humans reported an increase in heart defects and/or club foot (when the foot is twisted). As with other illicit drugs, MDMA may come in a form that is mixed with other drugs such as cocaine or caffeine. This means that it is hard to know for sure whether it’s the MDMA or something else that is added that causes pregnancy complications. Since the effects of MDMA on a baby during pregnancy are unknown, the healthiest choice is to avoid MDMA during pregnancy.

Could taking MDMA cause other pregnancy complications?

One study included 1 person who was pregnant that took MDMA in the third trimester. Based on the data available, it is not known if MDMA can cause other pregnancy complications.

Does taking MDMA in pregnancy cause long-term problems in behavior or learning for the baby?

Studies are very limited. One study that followed a small group of children exposed 1 month prior to pregnancy and in the first and second trimester, suggested that babies exposed to MDMA might be delayed in their development up to 2 years of age. The people who were pregnant also reported exposure to alcohol and other recreational drugs.

I have already taken MDMA during my pregnancy. What can I do to find out if the baby has a birth defect?

If you have used MDMA in pregnancy, talk with your healthcare provider. They can discuss screening options, such as an ultrasound.

Can I breastfeed while taking MDMA?

Studies have found MDMA in the breast milk of people who were breastfeeding and who used this drug. Amphetamine drugs (like MDMA) are concentrated in the breast milk, meaning they are found at higher levels in breastmilk than in the blood stream. The effect of MDMA on a breastfeeding infant is not known. However, the use of MDMA in
breastfeeding is strongly discouraged. If MDMA has already been taken, it has been recommended to not breastfeed for 48 hours. During this time breast milk should be expressed and discarded. Be sure to discuss your breastfeeding questions with your healthcare provider. If you suspect that baby has symptoms of fever, seizures, or rapid heartbeat, eyes rolling and looking upwards for a period of time, contact the child’s healthcare provider.

I take MDMA. Can it make it harder for me to get my partner pregnant or increase the chance of birth defects?

Some animal studies have found MDMA can damage the DNA in sperm. However, no decrease in the ability to get a partner pregnant was noted. At this time there is no evidence that paternal use of MDMA increases the risk for birth defects or other problems. In general, exposures that fathers or sperm donors 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.