

Methamphetamine

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

What is methamphetamine?

Methamphetamine is also known as metamfetamine, methylamphetamine, and desoxyephedrine. Other names for methamphetamine include “meth,” “crystal meth,” “crank,” “speed” or “ice.” Methamphetamine has been smoked, snorted, swallowed, injected, inhaled, taken rectally, or dissolved under the tongue.

Methamphetamine has been used without a prescription and/or without medical supervision. It has also been prescribed for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). This sheet will focus on the use of methamphetamine without a prescription or medical supervision.

If you are using methamphetamine without a prescription or medical supervision (sometimes called recreational use), treatment is available to help you. 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, let them know that you are pregnant so that you can get connected to the best facility to meet your needs.

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

It is not known if taking methamphetamine can make it harder to get pregnant.

Does taking methamphetamine increase the chance of miscarriage?

Miscarriage is common and can occur in any pregnancy for many different reasons. Using methamphetamine might increase the chance of miscarriage.

Does taking methamphetamine 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 not known if methamphetamine increases the chance for birth defects above the background risk. Information on whether methamphetamine increases the chance of birth defects is mixed. This makes it hard to know the actual risks for each woman who uses methamphetamine.

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

Methamphetamine use has been linked to a higher chance for preterm delivery (delivery before 37 weeks of pregnancy), poor growth (babies born too small and/or with a small head size), and low birth weight (weighing less than 5 pounds, 8 ounces [2500 grams] at birth). Some studies have suggested that methamphetamine use in pregnancy can increase the chance for high blood pressure, placental abruption (the placenta pulls away from the uterus) and for fetal or infant death. Pregnancy complications are more likely to happen when methamphetamine is used throughout the whole pregnancy or when taken at high doses.

If I take methamphetamine during pregnancy, will it cause withdrawal symptoms in my baby after birth?

Using methamphetamines near the end of pregnancy can increase the chance of symptoms in newborns (sometimes referred to as withdrawal). Symptoms can include trouble eating, sleeping too little or too much, having floppy (poor) muscle control or tight muscles, being jittery, and / or having a hard time breathing. Symptoms usually go away within a few weeks but can last for a few months. The baby might need to be admitted to the special care nursery (NICU). It is important that your healthcare providers know you are taking methamphetamine so that if symptoms occur your baby can get the care that is best for them.

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

Studies have suggested that children who were exposed to methamphetamine during pregnancy could have a higher chance for changes in their brain development, as well as learning and behavior problems later in life.

What can I do to find out if the baby has issues related to methamphetamine use?

It is important to talk with your healthcare provider about any exposures you have during pregnancy. They can help you find treatment or support and can go over any screening options that are available. Prenatal ultrasounds can screen for some birth defects. Ultrasound can also be used to monitor the growth of the fetus. There are no tests available during pregnancy that can tell how much effect there could be on future behavior or learning.

Breastfeeding while taking methamphetamine:

Methamphetamine can pass into breast milk. Methamphetamine should not be used without a prescription or medical supervision while breastfeeding. If methamphetamine is used, it has been suggested to pump and discard breastmilk for 48-100 hours. Be sure to talk to your healthcare provider about all your breastfeeding questions.

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

Methamphetamine use might affect the sperm, which could affect a man's fertility (ability to get a woman pregnant). Studies have not been done to see if a man's use of methamphetamine could increase the chance of birth defects above the background risk. 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 to view references.

Questions? Call 866.626.6847 | Text 855.999.3525 | Email or Chat at [MotherToBaby.org](https://mothertobaby.org).

Disclaimer: MotherToBaby Fact Sheets are meant for general information purposes and should not replace the advice of your health care provider. MotherToBaby is a service of the non-profit Organization of Teratology Information Specialists (OTIS). Copyright by OTIS, January 1, 2024.