Methamphetamine

This sheet is about exposure to methamphetamine 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 provider.

What is methamphetamine?

Methamphetamine is a strong stimulant drug that affects the brain and nervous system. 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. Some studies report links between methamphetamine or amphetamine use disorders and miscarriage, while others do not. Some women who use methamphetamine may have other exposures such as alcohol, tobacco, or other substances. That makes it hard to know whether the findings are due to methamphetamine itself or by other factors.

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

It is not known if methamphetamine can increase the chance of birth defects. Available information is mixed, and studies may include women with other exposures, such as alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. That makes it hard to know whether the findings are due to methamphetamine use itself or by other factors.

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

Methamphetamine use has been linked to a higher chance of preterm 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 [2,500 grams] at birth). Some studies suggest that methamphetamine use in pregnancy can increase the chance of 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 using 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 might have an increased chance of learning, behavioral, attention, motor, and/or neurodevelopmental differences.

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. Prenatal ultrasounds can be used to screen for some birth defects. Ultrasound can also be used to watch the growth of the pregnancy. Talk with your healthcare provider about any prenatal screenings or testing that are available to you. 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. Some exposed infants developed symptoms such as jitteriness, feeding problems, and abnormal sucking. 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 to 100 hours. Be sure to talk to your healthcare provider about all your breastfeeding questions.

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

Male fertility is the ability to make healthy sperm. Methamphetamine use might lower testosterone levels, damage the testes, and harm the cells that make sperm. This could make it harder to conceive a pregnancy. Studies have not been done to see if a man's use of methamphetamine could 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 Paternal Exposures at https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/paternal-exposures-pregnancy/,

Please click here for references.

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, May 1, 2026.