

# Prilocaine

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This sheet is about exposure to prilocaine 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 prilocaine?***

Prilocaine is a local anesthetic. Local anesthetics are medications that have been used to numb areas of the body for short periods of time. Prilocaine has been given by injection (given by shot) during dental procedures and has been used for surgical procedures on other areas of the body, such as the foot.

Prilocaine is also available in combination with lidocaine as a topical cream that is used on the skin. The brand name for this medication is EMLA®. For more information on lidocaine, please see the MotherToBaby fact sheet at: <https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/lidocaine/>.

There are case reports of people developing methemoglobinemia (when the blood does not deliver enough oxygen to the body's cells) after exposure to prilocaine. While anyone could develop methemoglobinemia from using prilocaine, it may be more likely to happen in some people than in others. Most patients with methemoglobinemia respond well to treatment. Talk with your healthcare providers about using prilocaine and any risks specific to you.

## ***I was given prilocaine for a procedure. Can it make it harder for me to get pregnant?***

Studies have not been done in humans to see if prilocaine could make it harder to get pregnant. One animal study reported no impact on fertility (ability to get pregnant) with the use of prilocaine.

## ***Does prilocaine increase the chance of miscarriage?***

Miscarriage is common and can occur in any pregnancy for many different reasons. Studies have not been done to see if prilocaine can increase the chance of miscarriage.

## ***Does prilocaine 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. Studies have not been done in humans to see if prilocaine can increase the chance of birth defects. Information from animal studies does not suggest that prilocaine would significantly increase the chance of birth defects above the background risk.

## ***Does taking prilocaine in pregnancy increase the chance of other pregnancy-related problems?***

Studies have not been done to see if prilocaine can increase the chance for pregnancy-related problems such as preterm delivery (birth before week 37) or low birth weight (weighing less than 5 pounds, 8 ounces [2500 grams] at birth).

There have been case reports of methemoglobinemia in the newborns of some people who received high doses of prilocaine during pregnancy.

## ***Does prilocaine affect future behavior or learning for the child?***

Studies have not been done to see if prilocaine can cause behavior or learning issues for the child.

## ***Breastfeeding and prilocaine:***

Prilocaine has not been well studied for use while breastfeeding. Based on available information from similar medications, a single dose of prilocaine during breastfeeding is unlikely to cause side effects in a breastfed infant. Be sure to talk to your healthcare provider about all your breastfeeding questions.

## ***If a male takes prilocaine, could it affect fertility or increase the chance of birth defects?***

Studies have not been done to see if prilocaine could affect human male fertility (ability to get partner pregnant) or increase the chance of birth defects above the background risk. 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 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).**

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