Prilocaine

This sheet is about exposure to prilocaine 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 prilocaine?

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

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

Some people have developed methemoglobinemia (a condition where the blood cannot carry enough oxygen) after using prilocaine. While it can happen to anyone, some people might be more at risk than others. Most people recover well with 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 can make it harder to get pregnant. One animal study reported that prilocaine did not affect fertility (ability to get pregnant).

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?

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 prilocaine, might increase the chance of birth defects in a pregnancy.

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.

Does using prilocaine in pregnancy increase the chance of other pregnancy-related problems?

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

Breastfeeding while using prilocaine:

Prilocaine has not been well studied for use while breastfeeding. Based on information about similar medications, receiving a single dose of prilocaine during breastfeeding is unlikely to cause side effects in a breastfed infant. If he person who is breastfeeding uses prilocaine topically, it is unlikely to affect the breastfed infant if applied away from the breast. Be sure to talk to your healthcare provider about all your breastfeeding questions.

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

Studies have not been done to see if prilocaine could affect men's fertility (ability to get a partner pregnant) or increase the chance of birth defects. 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.

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