Propranolol

This sheet is about exposure to propranolol 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 providers.

What is propranolol?

Propranolol is a medication that has been used to treat high blood pressure, some heart conditions, overactive thyroid, tremors, glaucoma, and migraines. It belongs to the class of medications called beta-blockers. Some brand names for propranolol are Inderal®, InnoPran XL®, Detensol®, Novo-Pranol®, Deralin®, and Cardinol®.

Sometimes when women find out they are pregnant, they think about changing how they take their medication, or stopping their medication altogether. However, it is important to talk with your healthcare providers before making any changes to how you take this medication. Your healthcare providers can talk with you about the benefits of treating your condition and the risks of untreated illness during pregnancy.

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

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

Does taking propranolol 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 propranolol can increase the chance of miscarriage.

Does taking propranolol 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 propranolol, might increase the chance of birth defects in a pregnancy. It is not known if propranolol can increase the chance for birth defects. Studies on the use of beta-blockers in general during pregnancy have not reported an increased chance of birth defects.

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

Propranolol has been linked to low birth weight (weighing less than 5 pounds, 8 ounces [2500 grams] at birth. However, it is not clear if this happens because of the medication, the condition being treated, or other factors.

The use of propranolol in late pregnancy might increase the chance for the baby to have symptoms of beta-blockade. These symptoms can appear shortly after birth and include slowed heart rate, low blood pressure, and low blood sugar. Not all babies exposed to propranolol will have these symptoms. It is important for your healthcare providers to know if you are taking propranolol so that your baby can get the care that is best for them.

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

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

What screenings or tests are available to see if my pregnancy has birth defects or other issues?

Ultrasound can be used to watch the growth of pregnancy. Talk with your healthcare provider about any prenatal screenings or testing that are available to you.

Breastfeeding while taking propranolol:

Propranolol passes into breastmilk in small amounts and is not expected to cause problems in full-term breastfed infants. If you suspect that the baby has symptoms such as being too sleepy or having trouble with feeding, contact the child's healthcare provider. Be sure to talk to your healthcare provider about all your breastfeeding questions.

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

Propranolol may cause some males to develop erectile dysfunction (ED), which could make it harder to conceive a pregnancy. 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.

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