Propranolol

This sheet talks about exposure to propranolol in a pregnancy and while breastfeeding. This information should not take the place of medical care and advice from your healthcare provider.

What is propranolol?
Propranolol is a drug known as a beta-blocker. Some brand names for this drug are Inderal®, Detensol®, Novo-Pranol®, Deralin®, and Cardinol®. Beta-blockers are used to treat high blood pressure, some heart conditions, overactive thyroid, tremors, and migraines. MotherToBaby has a general fact sheet on beta-blockers which can be found at: https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/beta-blockers/pdf/

I take propranolol. Can it make it harder for me to become pregnant?
Studies have not been done to see if taking propranolol could make it harder for a woman to become pregnant.

I just found out that I am pregnant, should I stop taking propranolol?
You should not stop taking this medication without first talking with your healthcare provider. For some people, stopping this medication abruptly could have an adverse effect on the heart.

Does taking propranolol increase the chance for miscarriage?
Studies on women have not been done to see if there is any increase in miscarriage while taking propranolol in early pregnancy.

Does taking propranolol in the first trimester increase the chance of birth defects?
In every pregnancy, a woman starts out with a 3-5% chance of having a baby with a birth defect. This is called her background risk. There is not enough information available to know if first trimester use of propranolol can cause birth defects. A study on a large number of pregnancies found that beta-blockers, in general, did not cause heart defects in babies.

Could taking propranolol in the second or third trimester cause other pregnancy complications?
Propranolol has been associated with reduced growth of the baby. However, it is not clear if this happens because of the propranolol, the health condition that the propranolol is used for, or both.

Can taking propranolol near delivery cause problems for the baby?
Propranolol use in late pregnancy may cause the baby to have symptoms of the drug acting on its heart, blood vessels, and metabolism. Symptoms would include slowed heart rate and low blood sugar.

Does taking propranolol in pregnancy cause long-term problems in behavior or learning for the baby?
At this time, there are no studies on the possible long-term effects of propranolol on the developing baby.

Can I breastfeed while taking propranolol?
A small amount of propranolol enters breast milk. A breastfed infant would likely receive less than 1 percent of the mother’s dose. If you suspect that the baby has drowsiness or difficulty 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 (ability to get partner pregnant) or increase the chance of birth defects?
Men taking propranolol might develop erectile dysfunction (ED). In general, exposures that fathers have are unlikely to increase risks to a pregnancy. For more information, please see the MotherToBaby fact sheet on Paternal Exposures (https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/paternal-exposures-pregnancy/pdf/).

Please click here for references.