Salmeterol (Serevent®, Serevent Diskus®)

This sheet is about exposure to salmeterol in a 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 salmeterol?

Salmeterol (Serevent®, Serevent Diskus®) is a medication that has been used to treat asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and also as prophylaxis for exercise induced bronchospasm. It is in a class of medications called beta2-agonists. Beta2-agonists help to open the airways in the lungs (bronchodilators). Salmeterol is a long-acting beta2-agonist taken by breathing it into the lungs (inhalation). It is used together with an inhaled corticosteroid to treat asthma. For information on inhaled corticosteroids, see the MotherToBaby fact sheet at https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/inhaled-corticosteroids-icss-pregnancy/.

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 your 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 salmeterol. Can it make it harder for me to get pregnant?

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

Does taking salmeterol 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 salmeterol can increase the chance of miscarriage.

Does taking salmeterol 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 salmeterol, might increase the chance of birth defects in a pregnancy. A small number of studies do not suggest an increased chance of birth defects with the use of inhaled salmeterol during pregnancy. When salmeterol is inhaled, very little of the drug gets into the blood. Even less of the medication is expected to reach the developing fetus.

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

Small studies have not suggested higher rates of preterm delivery (birth before week 37) or low birth weight (weighing less than 5 pounds, 8 ounces [2500 grams] at birth) with the use of salmeterol during pregnancy. Asthma that is not well controlled can increase the chance of pregnancy complications. For information on asthma, see the MotherToBaby fact sheet at https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/asthma-and-pregnancy/.

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

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

Breastfeeding while taking salmeterol:

Studies have not been done to look at the use of salmeterol during breastfeeding. When salmeterol is inhaled, very little of the drug gets into the blood and it is not expected to pass into breastmilk in large amounts. Using inhaled bronchodilators is usually compatible with breastfeeding. Be sure to talk to your healthcare provider about all your breastfeeding questions.

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

Studies have not been done to see if salmeterol could affect male fertility (ability to get a woman pregnant) or increase the chance of birth defects. When salmeterol is inhaled, very little of the drug gets into the blood, so effects on fertility or pregnancy are not expected. 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 for references.

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