



MotherToBaby

Medications & More During Pregnancy & Breastfeeding
Ask The Experts

Fact Sheet

by the **Organization of Teratology Information Specialists (OTIS)**

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Selegiline

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

What is selegiline

Selegiline is a medication approved to treat major depressive disorder and to help treat Parkinson's disease. It has also been used to treat other medical conditions. It is in a class of medications known as selective inhibitors of monoamine oxidase type B. It is available as a skin (transdermal) patch, with a trade name of Emsam®. It is also available in oral forms (capsule and tablet), with brand names such as Eldepryl® and Zelapar®.

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

This is not known. Studies on selegiline have not been done to learn if using this could make it harder for a woman to get pregnant.

I just found out that I am pregnant. Should I stop taking selegiline?

You should speak with your healthcare providers before making any changes to this medication. For some women, the benefits of staying on their medication can outweigh the potential risks. In general, monoamine oxidase inhibitors are avoided during pregnancy because of their side effects and interactions with other medications. However, they have been used when other medications have not been effective.

If you and your healthcare provider decide that you should stop this medication, you should discuss the best way to taper off of the medication. Some people can experience withdrawal symptoms after stopping monoamine oxidase inhibitors. This may include flu-like symptoms such as sweating, chills, nausea, and headaches, as well as anxiety, agitation, and trouble sleeping.

If you are taking this medication for depression, please see the MotherToBaby fact sheet on depression and pregnancy at: <https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/depression-pregnancy/pdf/>.

Does taking selegiline increase the chance for miscarriage?

Miscarriage can occur in any pregnancy. Adequate studies have not been done to see if selegiline increases the chance for miscarriage. Research has found that depression, itself, may increase the chance for miscarriage.

Does taking selegiline increase the chance of having a baby with a birth defect?

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 to know whether taking selegiline would increase this chance for birth defects. Experimental animal studies did not find a higher chance for birth defects. There are 3 case reports on women who became pregnant while being treated with selegiline and other medications. Two women stopped taking selegiline and 1 continued to use the medication through her pregnancy. All 3 women had healthy infants.

Could selegiline cause other pregnancy complications?

Studies have not been done to see if selegiline could cause other pregnancy complications.

I need to take selegiline throughout my pregnancy. Will it cause withdrawal symptoms in my baby after birth?

Selegiline has not been studied to see if taking it could cause withdrawal symptoms in a baby.

Will taking selegiline during pregnancy affect my baby's behavior or cause learning problems?

This is not known. There are no human studies looking at long term health in children who were exposed to this medication in a pregnancy.

Can I breastfeed my baby if I am taking selegiline?

Selegiline has not been well studied for use while breastfeeding. There are two case reports of infants who breastfed while their mothers used selegiline; both had no reported issues with development. It is not known how much selegiline would get into breastmilk. Talk to your healthcare provider about all of your breastfeeding questions.

What if the baby's father takes selegiline?

Selegiline has not been well studied in men who use this medication while trying to get a partner pregnant. In general, exposures that fathers have are unlikely to increase risks to a pregnancy. For more information, please see the MotherToBaby fact sheet Paternal Exposures and Pregnancy at <https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/paternal-exposures-pregnancy/pdf/>

Selected References

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National Pregnancy Registry for Psychiatric Medications:

There is a pregnancy registry for women who take psychiatric medications, such as selegiline. For more information you can look at their website: <https://womensmentalhealth.org/clinical-and-research-programs/pregnancyregistry/>.

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