Selegiline

This sheet is 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, sold under the name Emsam®. It can also be taken by mouth (orally) and is sold under brand names such as Eldepryl® and Zelapar®.

In general, monoamine oxidase inhibitors have been avoided during pregnancy because of their side effects and interactions with other medications. However, they have been used during pregnancy when other treatments have not worked. 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.

If you and your healthcare provider decide that you should stop this medication, you should discuss the best way to stop. It might be suggested to slowly lower the amount taken (taper off) because some people can experience withdrawal symptoms after stopping monoamine oxidase inhibitors. This might include flu-like symptoms (sweating, chills, nausea, and headaches), anxiety, agitation, and trouble sleeping.

If you are taking this medication for depression, MotherToBaby has a fact sheet on depression at: https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/depression-pregnancy/.

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

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

Does taking selegiline 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 selegiline could increase the chance for miscarriage.

Does taking selegiline 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 selegiline, might increase the chance of birth defects in a pregnancy.

It is not known if taking selegiline could increase the chance of birth defects. Experimental animal studies did not find a higher chance of birth defects. Studies have not been done in humans. 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 selegiline through the pregnancy; all 3 had healthy infants.

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

Studies have not been done to see if selegiline increases the chance for 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).

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

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

Breastfeeding while taking selegiline:

Selegiline has not been well studied for use while breastfeeding. There are 2 case reports of breastfeeding; no reported issues with development were reported. It is not known how much selegiline would get into breastmilk.

A product label for selegiline recommends women who are breastfeeding not use this medication during breastfeeding because of concerns about possible side effects in the nursing child. However, the benefits of breastfeeding and using selegiline may outweigh possible risks. Your healthcare provider can talk with you about using selegiline and what treatment is best for you. Be sure to talk to your healthcare provider about all of your breastfeeding questions**.**

If a man takes selegiline, could it affect fertility (ability to get a woman pregnant) or increase the chance of birth defects?

Studies have not been done to see if selegiline could affect a man's fertility or increase the chance of birth defects. In general, exposures that men have are unlikely to increase the 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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