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®.

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.

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

Talk with your healthcare providers before making any changes to how you take your medication. The benefits of staying on your medication during pregnancy should be weighed against the risks of untreated illness. 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 stop. It may be suggested to slowly lower the amount taken (taper off) because 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 at: https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/depression-pregnancy/.

Does taking selegiline increase the chance for miscarriage?

Miscarriage can occur in any pregnancy. It is not known if selegiline can increase the chance for miscarriage.

Does taking selegiline increase the chance of birth defects?

Every pregnancy starts out with a 3-5% chance of having a birth defect. This is called the background risk. It is not known if taking selegiline could increase the chance for birth defects. Experimental animal studies did not find a higher chance for birth defects. There are 3 case reports on people who became pregnant while being treated with selegiline and other medications. Two people stopped taking selegiline and 1 continued to use the medication through the pregnancy; all 3 had healthy infants.

Can taking selegiline cause other pregnancy complications?

It is not known if selegiline can 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.

Does taking selegiline in pregnancy cause long-term problems in behavior or learning for the baby?

It is not known if selegiline can cause behavior or learning issues. There are no human studies looking at long term health in children who were exposed to this medication in a pregnancy.

Can I breastfeed while taking selegiline?

Selegiline has not been well studied for use while breastfeeding. There are two case reports of infants exposed selegiline through breast milk; both had no reported issues with development. It is not known how much selegiline
would get into breastmilk. Be sure to talk to your healthcare provider about all of your breastfeeding questions.

I take selegiline. Can it make it harder for me to get my partner pregnant or increase the chance of birth defects?

Selegiline has not been well studied in males who use this medication while trying to conceive a pregnancy. 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.

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/.