

Albuterol

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

What is albuterol?

Albuterol (also called salbutamol) is a medication used for the treatment of asthma. It is in a class of medications called beta2-agonists. Beta2-agonists are called bronchodilators, meaning that they help to open the airways in the lungs. Albuterol is used in fast-acting inhalers for treatment of asthma. Some brand names are Asmavent®, Asmol®, Proventil®, Respax®, Respolin®, Salamol®, Salbulin®, Salbuvent® and Ventolin®.

Sometimes when people 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 this medication. Your healthcare providers can talk with you about the benefits of treating your condition and the risks of untreated illness during pregnancy. Untreated asthma increases the chance for complications for both the person who is pregnant and the baby. For more information, please see the MotherToBaby fact sheet on Asthma at <https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/asthma-and-pregnancy/>.

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

It is not known if albuterol can make it harder to get pregnant. Animal studies have shown no effect on fertility.

Does taking albuterol increase the chance for miscarriage?

Miscarriage is common and can occur in any pregnancy for many different reasons. It is not known if albuterol increases the chance for miscarriage.

Does taking albuterol 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. Although data is limited, studies do not suggest an increased chance for birth defects with the use of inhaled albuterol during pregnancy.

One study looked at the use of five different inhaled beta2-agonist bronchodilators in the first trimester of pregnancy. This study did not find an increase in the number of birth defects with use of any of these medications. Of the 259 people who were pregnant in this study, 20 of them took albuterol. Another study found a link between albuterol use and several types of birth defects. However, this study could not rule out the influence of asthma. Other studies do not support the suggestion that albuterol causes an increased chance for a pattern of birth defects.

Albuterol is considered a good medication to be used for asthma when a fast-acting inhaler is needed for immediate symptoms. It is important to treat asthma during pregnancy. Because albuterol is inhaled, it is absorbed into the body in lower amounts compared to pill / tablet forms of the medication. It is unknown how much, if any, of the medication reaches the developing baby. Research suggests that the amount is likely small. Use of a fast-acting albuterol inhaler more than two days per week can be a sign that asthma symptoms may not be well controlled. If so, talk with your healthcare provider about the best way to treat your asthma.

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

Albuterol has been used in the second and third trimester of pregnancy to prevent preterm delivery (delivery before 37 weeks of pregnancy). For treatment of preterm delivery, albuterol was given in high oral doses (by mouth). Treatment with high oral doses has been associated with an increase in maternal and fetal heart rate and a drop in maternal blood pressure. These effects are temporary. Long term effects from increased fetal heart rate have not been reported. Treatment with inhaled albuterol at prescribed doses has not been shown to cause these effects.

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

It is not known if albuterol can cause behavior or learning issues.

Breastfeeding while taking albuterol:

There have not been any studies of people taking albuterol while breastfeeding. However, using an albuterol inhaler is not thought to cause high enough levels in the person's bloodstream to pass into breast milk in large amounts. Inhaled bronchodilators are generally considered acceptable for use during breastfeeding. Be sure to talk to your healthcare provider about all your breastfeeding questions.

If a male takes albuterol, could it affect fertility (ability to get partner pregnant) or increase the chance of birth defects?

There are no data to suggest that a father's or sperm donor's use of albuterol at the time of conception increases the chance for birth defects. In general, exposures that fathers or sperm donors have are unlikely to increase the risks to a pregnancy. For more information, please see the MotherToBaby fact sheet about Paternal Exposures at <https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/paternal-exposures-pregnancy/>.

MotherToBaby is currently conducting a study looking at asthma and the medications used to treat asthma in pregnancy. If you would like to learn more, please call 1-877-311-8972 or visit <https://mothertobaby.org/join-study/>.

Please click here to view references.

Questions? Call 866.626.6847 | Text 855.999.3525 | Email or Chat at [MotherToBaby.org](https://mothertobaby.org).

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