

Women With Asthma Can Have Healthy Pregnancies

This article has been reviewed by Michael Schatz, MD, MS, FAAAAI

Having a baby is exciting, but it can also be stressful. And if you also have asthma, you may have questions about how your disease will affect your health and that of your unborn child.

It is possible to have a safe and healthy pregnancy if you have asthma. The key is managing your disease, especially since uncontrolled asthma is dangerous for both a woman and her baby. Receiving care from both an obstetrician and an allergist/immunologist will lead to the best possible outcomes for you and your baby.

Because your asthma can change over the course of your pregnancy, your doctor(s) should closely monitor your health. While some women's asthma may improve while pregnant, others will have more severe symptoms. If you are currently taking medications to treat your asthma, do not stop unless your doctor tells you to do so. Taking medications helps to control your disease, and will keep both you and your baby healthy.

Avoiding asthma triggers during pregnancy is another way to manage symptoms and prevent asthma attacks. If you smoke, quit. Smoking can make your asthma worse and is linked to many other health problems. Smoking can also harm your baby. Other asthma triggers include:

- Pollen
- Dust
- Pet dander
- Mold



Reducing your exposure to these triggers makes it less likely that you will have an asthma attack. Attacks are most likely during the third trimester. However, asthma attacks are generally infrequent during the last month of pregnancy.

Some studies suggest that mothers with asthma have an increased risk of preterm births, preeclampsia and low birth-weight babies. These risks are greater for women whose asthma is severe or uncontrolled. If you suffer from rhinitis, sinusitis or gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), these conditions may become worse when you are pregnant, and can make your asthma more difficult to deal with. Talk to your doctor if you are concerned about your risk for any of these conditions.

Find additional information on asthma, including a medication guide, at www.aaaai.org.

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DID YOU KNOW?

- Approximately 8% of pregnant women may be affected by asthma.
- Asthma attacks are most likely between the 24th and 36th weeks of pregnancy.
- If you have severe asthma, you may be more likely to experience a worsening of symptoms when you are pregnant.
- Asthma attacks are rare during labor and delivery.

To the Point

A third of pregnant women with asthma will experience more frequent or severe symptoms during pregnancy, a third will see their asthma symptoms improve and a third will experience no change.



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