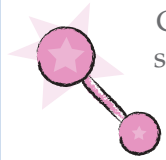


Patient Update

Breathing easy when you're pregnant



Congratulations! Pretty soon you will be a new mother. While you are pregnant, it is doubly important that your asthma be well-managed. Uncontrolled asthma can be a threat to maternal well-being and to fetal growth and survival.

The way you manage asthma now will be very similar to the way you manage asthma when you are pregnant. You still want to avoid asthma triggers, including specific allergens, such as house dust mites and animal dander, and irritants such as cigarette smoke. Your allergist/immunologist can also prescribe medications that are appropriate to use during your pregnancy.

Keeping it controlled

Studies indicate that maternal asthma that is well-managed during pregnancy does not increase the risk of maternal or infant complications. However, there is a direct relationship between uncontrolled asthma and lower birth weight. Therefore, keeping your asthma in check is the best bet for you and your baby.

Uncontrolled asthma affects your fetus because it causes a decrease in the oxygen content in the mother's blood. The baby is receiving its oxygen from that blood which can lead to impaired fetal growth and survival, since a fetus requires a constant sup-

ply of oxygen for normal growth and development.

Medications are a large part of controlling asthma. Most inhaled asthma medications are appropriate for patients to use while pregnant. The risks of uncontrolled asthma appear to be greater than the risks of necessary asthma medications. Oral medications (pills) are usually avoided unless they are needed to control your symptoms. Your doctor will be able to determine if this is the case. Allergy shots do not have an adverse effect on pregnancy, so they can be continued. However, your allergist/immunologist will monitor your dose to lessen the risk of an allergic reaction to the shots. These reactions are rare, but your physician will want to take all precautions. You should not begin allergy shots for the first time while pregnant.

How asthma affects pregnancy is different for many people. This is why it is important to communicate with your allergist/immunologist right away to properly manage your particular situation. Additionally, most women with asthma are able to perform Lamaze breathing techniques without difficulty.

After pregnancy

Breast feeding is a good way to increase your child's immunity. The transfer of drugs into breast milk has not been precisely evaluated; however, there appears to be no evidence that asthma medications ad-

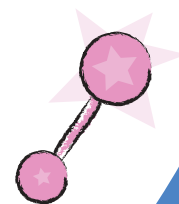


versely affect nursing infants. Also, if you have allergy symptoms while nursing, it is appropriate to use prescription drugs such as antihistamines and decongestants.

If you have concerns about asthma and pregnancy, consult with an allergist/immunologist. To find an allergist/immunologist in your area or to find additional information on asthma conditions, call the AAAAI's Physician Referral and Information Line at (800) 822-2762.

Asthma and pregnancy tips:

- Continue taking medications as prescribed
- Avoid asthma triggers
- Consult with your allergist/immunologist



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For more information on asthma and pregnancy, visit the Patients and Consumers Center of the AAAAI's Web site, www.aaaai.org.