

INFORMATION SHEET

Asthma and pregnancy

During pregnancy, some mothers-to-be may feel uneasy about taking medications. However, it is important to the health of both mother and baby that the mother's asthma is well managed.

Your baby will do best if you are breathing well and easily. There may be risks to the baby if your asthma is poorly controlled.

Work with your doctor to create a written Asthma Action Plan and have it reviewed at regular times during your pregnancy.

Your asthma may change

For some women, pregnancy can mean a change in their asthma. For some women their asthma worsens and for others it improves, and for others there is no change at all.

As the baby grows and the womb enlarges, some women feel breathless, particularly with physical activity. This is part of the normal changes that occur during pregnancy. If you are concerned, speak to your doctor.

Medications are safe

Asthma medications are extremely safe and appropriate for use during pregnancy. Most asthma medications are inhaled, which delivers medication directly to the airways where it is needed so a small dose can often be enough. Medication is not dependent on circulation through the bloodstream and, to some extent, bypasses the baby.

Labour won't be affected

Asthma attacks during labour are rare. However, you should make sure your asthma medication is always accessible, including when you are in hospital. If you have asthma symptoms during labour, take your reliever medication as usual.

Severe or unstable asthma

Uncontrolled asthma has been linked with premature births and low weight babies. If your asthma is severe or unstable, your Asthma Action Plan should include a plan for labour that takes anaesthetic options into account. This action plan needs the input of both your obstetrician and your asthma specialist.

Don't smoke

You can improve and better manage your asthma if you don't smoke.

Cigarette smoking also has many damaging effects on your developing baby, including:

- Risk of a premature birth
- Reduced birth weight, which can bring about other complications
- Risk of foetal death, stillbirth and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)
- Risk of asthma and respiratory infections.

Breastfeeding

Most asthma medications are safe to take during breastfeeding. If you are concerned, speak with your doctor.

Where to get help

- Your doctor
- Your obstetrician
- Your local pharmacy
- The Asthma Foundation of Victoria Tel. 1800 645 130 or (03) 9326 7088.

Things to remember

- Continue to take your asthma medications as prescribed when you are pregnant. Poorly controlled asthma is more of a risk to your baby.
- Discuss any concerns with your doctor and work together to develop an Asthma Action Plan. Feeling breathless in late pregnancy is common, even in pregnant women who don't have asthma.

This resource satisfies the guidelines and standards approved by the National Asthma Council and Asthma Australia. The materials contained in this publication are distributed for information purposes only. Suitable medical and professional advice should be obtained before acting on any information contained herein.

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