



Public / Diseases & conditions / Acne / How dermatologists treat / **During pregnancy**

IS ANY ACNE TREATMENT SAFE TO USE DURING PREGNANCY?

So many things change during pregnancy, and your acne treatment may need to be one of them. Here's what you should know about using acne treatment while you're pregnant.

Acne medication never to take during pregnancy

If you're pregnant, immediately stop taking these medications and do not use them during your pregnancy.



Unsafe medications during pregnancy

Isotretinoin

Brand names include: Absorica®, Amnesteem®, Claravis®, Myorisan®, Sotret®, and Zenatane™

Tazarotene

Brand names include: Avage®, Fabior®, Tazorac®, and Zorac®

Spironolactone

Brand name: Aldactone®

These medications can cause serious birth defects.

Using other acne treatments during pregnancy

It's more difficult to say what can safely treat acne while you're pregnant. Researchers don't give pregnant women medications, so there are no studies to tell us what happens when pregnant women use a treatment.

What we know comes from animal studies and women who have used acne treatments while pregnant. From this, researchers have learned the following about acne medications:

Adapalene (brand name: Differin® gel): Most experts recommend stopping this treatment during pregnancy.

Antibiotics (you apply to your skin): Applying clindamycin during pregnancy is thought to be safe. Before using it while you're pregnant, it's best to check with your obstetrician or dermatologist.

Antibiotics (you take): Cefadroxil is an antibiotic that can help clear severe acne. In giving pregnant animals large amounts of this antibiotic, researchers haven't seen birth defects.

The antibiotics that are often used to treat acne, such as azithromycin and clarithromycin, also seem safe during pregnancy. A few women, however, have had a baby with a birth defect while taking one of these. We don't know for certain whether the antibiotic caused the birth defect.

Pregnancy and antibiotics

Stop taking doxycycline, minocycline, or tetracycline by your 15th week of pregnancy.



Azelaic acid: This is thought to be safe to use during pregnancy. In animal studies, researchers haven't seen birth defects.

Benzoyl peroxide: Often found in acne treatment you can buy without a prescription, experts say it's safe to use in limited amounts. For this reason, you should talk with your obstetrician or dermatologist before using it while you're pregnant.

Dapsone (brand name, Aczone®): In animal studies, this medication hasn't caused birth defects. While that's great news, we don't have much information about what happens when pregnant women take it. This is a newer acne treatment.

For this reason, experts recommend that doctors be very cautious when they prescribe dapsone to women who are pregnant.

Laser and light therapies: Lasers have been used to safely treat medical conditions in women who are pregnant. As such, lasers are considered relatively safe for women who are pregnant.

If you are considering using a laser or light treatment for your acne while pregnant, please make an appointment to see a dermatologist first. There are many different types of lasers and light treatments. Some require a numbing solution or medicine, which could affect your baby.

Salicylic acid: Often found in acne treatment you can buy without a prescription, salicylic acid is generally considered safe when used for a limited time. For this reason, you should talk with your obstetrician or dermatologist before using it during your pregnancy.

Tretinoin (brand name: Retin-A®): Most experts recommend stopping this treatment during pregnancy.

A dermatologist can help you sort out your options

As you can see, we don't have a lot of information about what can safely treat acne during pregnancy. Your health also plays a role in what acne treatments you can use while you're pregnant.

If you want to treat acne during your pregnancy, it helps to get expert advice from your obstetrician or a dermatologist before using any acne treatment.

Image

Getty Images

References

Chien AL, Qi J, *et al.* "Treatment of acne in pregnancy." *J Am Board Fam Med.* 2016;29(2):254-62.

Murase JE, Heller MM, *et al.* "Safety of dermatologic medications in pregnancy and lactation Part I. Pregnancy." *J Am Acad Dermatol* 2014;70:401.e1-14.

All content solely developed by the American Academy of Dermatology

The American Academy of Dermatology gratefully acknowledges the support from Ortho Dermatologics.

Ortho | Dermatologics