

Pregnancy and Asthma

Just because you have asthma, doesn't mean that you can't have a healthy pregnancy. Still, whether you're pregnant or not, you have to keep your asthma symptoms in control. Asthmatics who see their doctors (both their allergist and/or internist and obstetrician) regularly throughout their pregnancy have as good a chance of having a normal pregnancy and healthy baby as women without asthma.

Can Pregnancy Make My Asthma Worse? It may. There is no clear answer to this question. For some women, their asthma gets worse during pregnancy, for others, it stays the same, and for even others it improves. In general, if your asthma is severe, chances are it may become a little worse during your pregnancy. On the other hand, if you were pregnant before and your asthma did not get worse, it likely will not get worse during the next pregnancy. Asthma is almost never a reason to not get pregnant. However, if you have severe asthma, it is worth talking to your doctor for asthma support before you get pregnant. **What Harm Can Come to My Pregnancy and Baby If My Asthma Isn't Well Controlled?** If you do not keep your asthma under control during your pregnancy, you may suffer from high blood pressure, severe bleeding, eclampsia (also called toxemia) and have a complicated labor. Your baby may be born prematurely with a low birth weight and could be at risk for an early death. For these reasons, it is very important to keep your asthma in control during your pregnancy. **What Should I Do to Control My Asthma While I am Pregnant?** During pregnancy, just as any other time, one of the best ways to control your asthma is to avoid asthma triggers. For instance, if you have allergies and asthma, you can prevent asthma attacks by avoiding the things you're allergic to. So if you are allergic to pets, do not allow them in your house. If you are allergic to dust mites and dust, use air filters, filters on your vacuum cleaner, coverings for your beds and pillows, and so on. These are essentially the same things that you would otherwise do to prevent an asthma attack; however, when you are pregnant, it is important to be even more thorough and careful. In addition, by following your asthma action care plan and continuing to maintain a daily asthma diary, you will be less likely to have problems. **Can I Continue to Take My Asthma Medicine While I am Pregnant?** Several scientific studies have shown that if you do not control your asthma properly during pregnancy, you are much more likely to harm both yourself and your baby than if you use appropriate asthma medicines to control your asthma. If you are using an asthma inhaler, most doctors believe that because the amount of medicine you get from a puff of inhaler is small and goes straight to your lungs, it is not likely to harm your baby. If you take oral asthma medications or shots to control your asthma, you may want to talk to your doctor about decreasing the dose, switching medicines or using an inhaler. Oral medications and shots can be absorbed into your bloodstream and there is a small chance that they may harm your baby, especially during the first trimester. The most appropriate thing to do is to talk to your doctor, who will look at how severe your asthma is and what treatment is appropriate for you. **Can I Take Allergy Shots and Flu Shots During My Pregnancy?** You should tell your allergist if you are pregnant. Allergy shots are usually not started if a woman is pregnant. But if you are already taking allergy shots, your doctor will probably continue them and monitor you for any problems. If you have moderate to severe asthma, a flu shot is generally a good idea. Some experts recommend that the flu shot be given during the second and third trimesters only. Again, your doctor is the best person to determine if you should receive a flu shot during pregnancy. **Can I Take My Asthma Medicine During Labor and When Breastfeeding?** In general, the same asthma treatment that is appropriate when you are pregnant is appropriate when you go into labor and when you breastfeed your baby. Talk to your doctor to make sure your asthma medicine is safe to keep taking in these circumstances.