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Propecia/Proscar (finasteride) and Pregnancy

The information below will help you determine if the use of Propecia/Proscar (finasteride) represents an increased fetal risk. With every pregnancy, all women have a 3 to 5 percent chance to have a baby with a birth defect.

What are Propecia and Proscar?

Propecia and Proscar are two different forms of a drug called finasteride, which was approved by the FDA in 1992. Propecia was licensed in 1997 for the treatment and prevention of male pattern baldness. Proscar was approved for treatment of benign prostatic hyperplasia. Both are used to inhibit a chemical in the body called 5-alpha-reductase. Neither Propecia nor Proscar are approved at this time for use in women.

My partner is taking finasteride but is wondering if he should stop before I become pregnant. Is this necessary and if so, how long does it stay in the body?

The benefits of taking the medication and any possible adverse outcomes from not taking it should be taken into account and discussed with his healthcare provider before deciding to stop treatment. There is no known reason for him to stop taking this medication while planning a family. If he does decide to stop using finasteride, it takes on average two days for most of the drug to be eliminated from the body after the last dose.

If my partner decides to continue taking finasteride, will it be more difficult for me to become pregnant?

There is no evidence to say that if your partner is taking this medication it will

make it more difficult for you to become pregnant. Animal studies suggest a temporary decrease in male fertility, however in humans no adverse effect on the semen have been found. There are no reports linking this medication to human infertility or an inability to become pregnant.

Is there an increased risk for birth defects if the baby's father is taking finasteride when I become pregnant?

Studies in animals found that pregnancies sired by male rats that were given large doses of finasteride did not result in babies born with birth defects. There are no such studies in humans at this time.

If I touch or handle finasteride tablets during pregnancy does the baby have an increased risk for birth defects?

Animal studies have shown that pregnant monkeys who were given large doses of finasteride orally had male offspring with abnormalities of the sex organs. There are no human studies. Based on this information, women are told not to handle tablets that are crushed or broken during pregnancy. However, it is highly unlikely that enough of the medication would be absorbed through unbroken skin during the course of normal handling to be a problem.

Should my partner stop taking finasteride while I am pregnant?

There is a theoretical, although highly unlikely, risk for birth defects of a male fetus's sex organs if the couple has intercourse during the stage of pregnancy when the sex organs are developing (8 to 15 weeks of gestation). However, the amount of the drug found in the semen is very small and is not felt to be enough to harm a male baby.

If my partner stops using Propecia will there be side effects?

Propecia must be used daily for three months, on average, before results can be seen. Continued use is recommended to sustain this benefit. There is no lasting benefit if treatment is stopped, and there will be a reversal of any benefits within twelve months of stopping treatment.

Can I take finasteride while breastfeeding?

This medication has not been approved for use by women. Even if a woman does decide to use finasteride and breastfeed, there are no studies to show if it is excreted in breast milk.

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