

SCOTTSDALE, AZ, September 17, 2013 /24-7PressRelease/ -- Pregnancy is a challenging time in many women's lives. For women with depression -- whether they had depression before pregnancy or they developed the illness during pregnancy -- it brings added difficulties. These women face a potentially serious issue: whether to take antidepressants during pregnancy.

Some antidepressants, including selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors, or SSRIs, may be linked to certain kinds of birth defects in babies. Unfortunately for pregnant women and their babies, the medical community does not yet know for certain whether SSRIs can be a [dangerous drug](#) during pregnancy, but there is evidence linking one of the most common kinds of antidepressants to birth defects that include a rare heart and lung condition.

### About Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs)

SSRIs are a commonly prescribed class of antidepressants. They include:

- Celexa- Lexapro- Prozac- Luvox- Paxil- Zoloft

Studies have linked these drugs to birth defects, including heart defects and a rare heart and lung condition in babies called persistent pulmonary hypertension (PPHN). PPHN is a serious condition that requires intensive monitoring and treatment. Even with treatment, the circulatory system of an infant with this disease may not supply enough oxygen to the tissue. Shock, heart failure, brain hemorrhage and other serious complications can result.

### Conflicting Studies About SSRIs

Why, given the potential link between these drugs and birth defects, do doctors continue to prescribe them to pregnant women? Part of the problem is that studies and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) have conflicting information about the potential effect of antidepressants on pregnancy. In 2006, the FDA warned that a study focusing on newborns had found a rare but serious risk to taking SSRIs. PPHN was six times more common in babies whose mothers took an SSRI in the second half their pregnancies than in those who did not. The FDA said no additional studies had been performed at the time.

Since that safety advisory, studies have produced conflicting findings about whether using SSRIs during pregnancy can cause the heart and lung condition in newborns. For example, the FDA said three other studies reported no increase in the risk of this heart condition. The FDA then retracted its 2006 warning and advised medical providers not to change their current practices.

But in 2012, a study in the British Medical Journal found that infants had an increased risk of congenital heart malformations when their mothers took SSRIs during the first trimester of their pregnancies.

### Should Pregnant Women Take SSRIs?

Studies like these can leave pregnant mothers wondering whether SSRIs are safe. For now, that question is best answered through discussions with medical providers and weighing the need for antidepressants against potential risks to the baby. Manufacturers of SSRIs also have a responsibility to warn users of the potential risks of taking SSRIs during pregnancy. Mothers of babies with birth defects that could be linked to SSRIs may be able to hold manufacturers responsible through a [product liability](#) lawsuit for their failure to warn about the potential dangers of these drugs.

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