

Ondansetron in pregnancy

What is Ondansetron?

Ondansetron is a medication that we use to treat nausea and vomiting. In pregnancy it is used as third line medication. This means that it is used if two other medications have not helped with the woman's symptoms.

Is Ondansetron safe in pregnancy?

A large study of over 1.8million pregnancies in 2018 has shown that there is no increased association with heart problems in babies of mum's who take Ondansetron in pregnancy. There was an increased association of 3 per 10,000 of cleft palate. This means that the number of babies born with cleft palate increased from 11 per 10,000 to 14 per 10,000).

What are the benefits of taking Ondansetron in Pregnancy?

There is a significant risk to women in early pregnancy with severe nausea and vomiting, including, and not limited to malnutrition, dehydration, hospital admission, loss of work, blood clots, reduced quality of life, small babies and some women opt to terminate the pregnancy as the sickness is so severe.

Because we use Ondansetron as a third line this means that only women with severe nausea and vomiting are taking the medication.

What does the Pregnancy Sickness Community say?

The pregnancy sickness community has challenged this view that Ondansetron should not be used in the first trimester based upon the trial. The European Medicines Agency (EMA) responded to say that their statement is not referring to women with severe nausea and vomiting in pregnancy. They said that it is up to local units to decide whether to continue to prescribe for women with severe nausea and vomiting in pregnancy.

The advice from the pregnancy sickness community is that we should inform women of the small increased association with cleft lips and palates . If women understand and are willing to accept the risk we should continue to prescribe Ondansetron.

More information

Talk to your doctor for more information or visit the Pregnancy Sickness Support website <https://www.pregnancysicknesssupport.org.uk/>

i Huybrechts K F, Hernandez-Diaz S, Straub L, Gray K J, Zhu Y, Patrono E, Desai R J, Mogun H, Bateman B T. Association of maternal first trimester Ondansetron use with cardiac malformations and oral cleft palates in offspring. JAMA 2018;320(23):2429-2437

ii Ondansetron update. Pregnancy Sickness Support. Available at <https://www.pregnancysicknesssupport.org.uk/news/items/ondansetron-update> Accessed 28th November 2019

This leaflet can be made available in different formats on request. If you would like to make any suggestions or comments about the content of this leaflet, then please contact the Patient Experience Team on 0151 702 4353 or by email at pals@lwh.nhs.uk

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