

# New Study shows Antibiotics Tied to Miscarriages May Lead to Birth Defects

A recent study done by the UK has linked certain antibiotics, taken during pregnancy, to a higher risk of birth defects. The study shows that women given antibiotics in the macrolide class, compared to those given penicillin, were 55% more likely to give birth to babies with major birth defects. Antibiotics in the macrolide class include erythromycin, clarithromycin, and azithromycin. These antibiotics are most often given to women who are allergic to penicillin, to treat bacterial infections.

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*Macrolides are frequently prescribed in pregnancy, and our findings suggest it would be better to avoid macrolides during pregnancy if alternative antibiotics can be used"*

*-Study leader Heng Fan of University College London.*

The study was conducted on 104,605 children born as early as 1990, up to 2016 whose mothers took penicillin or macrolides while pregnant. Additionally, the study consisted of two negative control groups of mothers who were prescribed macrolides or penicillin before pregnancy and 53,000 children who were siblings of children in the study.

*Along with birth defects, researchers also looked for connections between antibiotics and cerebral palsy, epilepsy, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and autism but found no links."*

*Common antibiotics tied to miscarriages may also lead to birth defects*

A total of 186 children born throughout the study, whose mothers took macrolides, had major birth defects, (28 out of every 1000 babies) The birth defects documented included defects to the brain and nervous system, heart, lungs, digestive tract, urinary tract, or genitals. The majority of the women in the study were given penicillin and among these women 1,666 babies were born with major birth defects, 18 per 1,000 babies.

It should be noted that this study does not examine the overall health of each mother before or during pregnancy. Additionally, the study does not draw attention to the changes in prenatal care from 1990 to 2016 and it is unclear rather more birth defects occurred earlier in the study or later.

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**Sources:**

- *Common Antibiotics tied to miscarriages may also lead to birth defects-Reuters*
- *Associations between macrolide antibiotics prescribing during pregnancy and adverse child outcomes in the UK: population based cohort study -BMJ*