

# Steroids Linked to Fetal Growth Retardation

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NEW ORLEANS – The use of potent or very potent topical corticosteroids in pregnancy was linked with a significantly increased risk of fetal growth retardation in a large population-based cohort study.

Maternal exposure to topical corticosteroids was not linked with any other ad-

verse outcomes, including miscarriage, stillbirth, preterm delivery, or orofacial cleft, said Dr. Linda F. Stein, director of dermatology research at Henry Ford Hospital, Detroit. The study's unusually large size makes for convincing conclusions about the safety of topical steroids in pregnancy, she added.

Researchers at Chang Gung University in Taoyuan, Taiwan, and the University of Oxford (England) used the U.K.

General Practice Research Database to identify 35,503 women who had received topical corticosteroids during or shortly before pregnancy, and a control group of 48,630 unexposed pregnant women (*J. Invest. Dermatol.* 2010 Dec. 30 [doi:10.1038/jid.2010.392]). Maternal exposure to potent or very potent topical steroids was linked with an adjusted 2.1-fold increased relative risk of fetal growth restriction. A significant dose-response

relationship was found: For every 30 g of prescribed potent or very potent topical steroids, the risk of fetal growth retardation climbed by about 3%. The risk rose with the increasing potency of the topical medication. The researchers estimated that 168 pregnant women would have to receive potent or very potent topical steroids to result in one additional case of fetal growth restriction.

Dr. Stein had no disclosures. ■

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