

Supports available

Talk with your MFM service, midwife or health provider about help that may be available to you such as:

- Access to counselling, cultural and spiritual supports, through your local services or the MFM service, for you and your whānau.
- Financial help with travel and accommodation when attending MFM Specialist appointments away from where you live.

Other supports

Parent to Parent New Zealand

<https://parent2parent.org.nz/>

Parent to Parent New Zealand is an information and support network for parents of children with special needs ranging from the very common to the rarest conditions. The service is free to families.

Support groups may change over time - check with the MFM team

For more information please contact
your NZMFM Unit

Wellington

Wellington Hospital
Riddiford Street
Newtown, Wellington 6021
Phone: 04 806 0774

Auckland

Auckland Hospital
2 Park Road
Grafton, Auckland 1023
Phone: 09 367 0000 extn 24951

Christchurch

Christchurch Women's Hospital
2 Riccarton Ave, Christchurch 4711
Phone: 03 364 4557

Te Whatu Ora Health New Zealand

Further information

<https://www.healthpoint.co.nz/public/wahi-rua-new-zealand-maternal-fetal-medicine/>

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Wāhi Rua
New Zealand
Maternal
Fetal Medicine
Network

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Isotretinoin in pregnancy (Accutane)

The purpose of this consumer pamphlet is to provide information and advice from the Maternal Fetal Medicine service about:

- The medication Isotretinoin (also known as Accutane)
- Risks to your unborn baby/pēpē if you are taking this medication while pregnant and/or breastfeeding
- Seeing the Maternal Fetal Medicine service for further advice, care and supports.

Isotretinoin

Isotretinoin is a prescription medication used to treat severe acne that has not been helped by other treatments, including oral antibiotics. Isotretinoin is a member of a family of drugs called retinoids, which are related to Vitamin A.

Isotretinoin should not be taken by those who are planning pregnancy, having sex without birth control, pregnant, or are breastfeeding. This is due to the risk of miscarriage, preterm birth and /or very serious birth defects.

Pregnancy planning

It is usually recommended that people wait at least one month after stopping Isotretinoin before attempting to become pregnant. We know that Isotretinoin stays in the body for some days after the last dose.

During pregnancy

During pregnancy, Isotretinoin and other retinoids may cause miscarriage or preterm birth. The risk of having a miscarriage may be as high as 40% when Isotretinoin is taken in early pregnancy. There is a very high risk (>35%) of disruptions to normal development (you may see this referred to as birth defects) in the baby depending on the timing of exposure to the drug. Isotretinoin can cause interruptions to normal development in the early weeks after conception when a person often does not know they are pregnant. Up to 60% of birth defects can be diagnosed on ultrasound. Even babies without obvious birth defects have a high chance of intellectual delay or learning disabilities.

Birth defects caused by Isotretinoin include:

- Hydrocephaly (enlargement of the fluid-filled spaces in the brain)
- Microcephaly (small head and brain)
- Intellectual disabilities
- Ear and eye abnormalities
- Cleft palate and other facial differences
- Heart defects.

Breastfeeding

Women should not breastfeed while taking Isotretinoin and not for one month after stopping the medication because it is not known what effect exposure can have on the baby.

Seeing the Maternal Fetal Medicine (MFM) service

The Maternal Fetal Medicine (MFM) team will assess you and your unborn baby. They will want to find out from you about your pregnancy health, such as the gestation (stage of pregnancy) you were at while taking the medication. This is important, as the risks to the pregnancy and pēpē can change depending on the stage of pregnancy the medication was taken.

The MFM service will then discuss the risks to your unborn baby, offer advice, and make a plan with you. Sometimes it may be agreed to wait until the 18-20 week detailed ultrasound scan to assess for any abnormalities. It is important to remember that conditions like deafness, blindness, and learning and developmental problems are not possible to assess with ultrasound.