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## Pregnant women warned of antidepressants danger to their unborn child

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Women who use antidepressants while pregnant are being warned by health chiefs about the risks to their unborn child.

The Government's medicines watchdog advised doctors there is an increased risk that babies will be born with a rare lung condition if expectant mothers take drugs such as Prozac and Seroxat.

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) is recommending they are monitored more carefully because of the risk of developing persistent pulmonary hypertension after birth.



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**Unseen danger: It is recommended pregnant women are monitored more carefully because of the risk of babies developing persistent pulmonary hypertension after birth**

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The condition normally affects up to two in 1,000 births – but the latest research suggests the risk is more than doubled in women taking antidepressants, affecting five in 1,000 births. The life-threatening condition means infants do not adapt to breathing outside of the womb.

The risk is greater if the medicines known as SSRIs – a new generation of depression wonder drugs – are taken later in the pregnancy.

The warning comes five years after studies first showed there may be a link between the drugs and birth defects. The MHRA advised doctors not to prescribe the drugs to pregnant women unless necessary.

However, it was revealed last year that GPs were still prescribing them to women considering becoming pregnant.

The new alert comes after research carried out by the European Medicines Agency's Pharmacovigilance Working Party consolidated the link.

It is spelt out in the MHRA's latest monthly Drug Safety Update, which is distributed to health professionals.

It reads: 'A review of data has suggested that the use of SSRIs in pregnancy, particularly in the later stages, may increase the risk of persistent pulmonary hypertension in the newborn.'

The MHRA will now warn of the risk in leaflets inside the drugs' packaging. The body said: 'The article was intended to raise awareness of this risk.'