## Medications Used to Manage Preeclampsia and Gestational Hypertension

(formerly known as Pregnancy Induced Hypertension or PIH)

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| Anticonvulsants (for seizure prevention) | • Given intravenously when mother has severe preeclampsia.  
• Initially, mother receives a large dose to quickly raise blood levels to a therapeutic level, and then magnesium sulfate is given in an intravenous (IV) solution by continuous infusion. | • Prevents or controls seizures by depressing central nervous system function. | **To mother:**  
• Jitteriness, irritability  
• Flushing of face and trunk  
• Sweating  
• Lowered temperature  
• Low blood pressure  
• Lethargy, blurred vision  
• Nausea and vomiting  
• Pulmonary edema, especially when combined with corticosteroid treatment  
• Impaired reflexes  
• Respiratory depression  
• Cardiac arrest (very rare)  
• Postpartum constipation  
**To fetus:**  
• Drug crosses to fetus at levels close to those in the mother.  
**To newborn:**  
• Takes 3–4 days to eliminate from circulation.  
• Reduced muscle tone  
• Low blood calcium levels  
• Respiratory depression | • Women often find magnesium to be extremely uncomfortable, but it is very effective in preventing seizures. |
| Antihypertensives (to lower blood pressure) | • Labetalol is given intravenously or by mouth.  
• Nifedipine and methyldopa are given by mouth. | • Lowers blood pressure by dilating blood vessels throughout the mother’s body.  
• Helps treat high blood pressure during pregnancy and childbirth. | **To mother:**  
• Labetalol may cause slowing of heart rate, shortness of breath, and drowsiness.  
• Nifedipine may cause transient hypotension (low blood pressure) and possible liver problems.  
**To fetus and newborn:**  
• Labetalol effects include neonatal hypotension (low blood pressure), slow heart rate, and hypoglycemia (low blood sugar).  
• Labetalol is contraindicated in women with asthma or with certain cardiac problems.  
• Nifedipine should not be used with magnesium sulfate. |