



TAKING MEDICINE DURING PREGNANCY

While some medications are considered safe to take during pregnancy, the effects of other medications on your unborn baby are unknown. Therefore, it is very important to pay special attention to the medications you take while you are pregnant, especially during the first trimester, a crucial time of development for you baby.

If you were taking prescription medications before you became pregnant, please ask your health care provider about the safety of continuing these medications as soon as you find out that you are pregnant. Your health care provider will weigh the benefit to you and the risk to your baby when making his or her recommendation about a particular medication. With some medications, the risk of not taking them may be more serious than the potential risk associated with taking them.

If you are prescribed any new medication, please inform your health care provider that you are pregnant. Be sure to discuss the risks and benefits of the newly prescribed medications with your health care provider before taking the medication.

What medications are safe to take during pregnancy?

Prenatal vitamins, now available without a prescription, are safe to take during the pregnancy. Ask your health care provider about the safety of taking other vitamins, herbal remedies and supplements during pregnancy. Most herbal preparations and supplements have not been proven to be safe during pregnancy.

Generally, you should not take any over the counter medication unless necessary.

Can I take alternative therapies during pregnancy?

Many pregnant women believe “natural” products can be safely used to relieve nausea, backache, and other annoying symptoms of pregnancy, but many of these so called natural products have not been tested for safety and effectiveness in non-pregnant women, much less in pregnant women. Therefore, it is very important to check with your provider before taking any alternative therapies. He or she will not recommend a product or therapy until it is shown to be safe and effective.

What alternative therapies are considered safe during pregnancy?

There are some alternative therapies that have been shown to be safe and effective for pregnant women to take to relieve some of the uncomfortable side effects of pregnancy.

- *Nausea in early pregnancy:* acupuncture, acupressure, ginger root (250 mg 4 times a day) and vitamin B6 (pyridoxine 25mg 2 or 3 times a day)
- *Backache:* chiropractic manipulation
- *Turning a breech baby:* exercise, hypnosis, and traditional Chinese treatment (burning incense like substance on the fifth toe) have been proven to be beneficial.
- *Pain relief in labor:* epidurals are most effective, but injections of sterile saline water near a woman’s tailbone works well, as does immersion in a warm bath, or use of a high tech nerve stimulator called TENS. Relaxation technique, patterned breathing, emotional support, and self-hypnosis are already widely used alternative therapies in labor.



What alternative therapies should be avoided?

The following substances have the potential to harm a developing baby when used in concentrated formulations (not as a spice in cooking):

Avoid these oral supplements: Arbor vitae, Beth root, Black cohosh, Clue cohosh, Cascara, Chaste tree berry, Chinese angelica (Dong Quai), Cinchona, Cotton root bark, Feverfew, Ginseng, Golden seal, Juniper, Kava kava, Licorice, Meadow saffron, Pennyroyal, poke root, Rue, Sage, St. John's wort, Senna, Tansy, White peony, Wormwood, Yarrow, Yellow dock, Vitamin A (large doses can cause birth defects).
Avoid these aromatherapy essential oils: calamus, mugwort, pennyroyal, sage, wintergreen basil, hyssop, myrrh, marjoram, thyme.

If you have any doubt regarding the safety of a medication, either traditional or alternative, contact your health care provider before taking the therapy.

The following handout is a table of medications and home remedies that have no harmful effects during pregnancy when taken according to the package directions. If you want to know about the safety of any other medications not listed here, please contact your health care provider.

Medications in Pregnancy

The following over the counter medications are generally considered safe during pregnancy.

Symptoms	Medication	Comments
Headaches, fever or pain	Tylenol (Acetaminophen) - use as directed on package, don't exceed recommended dose	
Heartburn	Maalox, Mylanta, Tums, Gaviscon, Titalac	Don't lay down right after eating. Try to elevate your head with pillows while sleeping
Constipation	Metamucil, Citrucil, Fiberall/Fibercon, Colace, Milk of Magnesia, Senekot	Drink at least 8 glasses of water/day; eat lots of fruits and vegetables; try prunes and prune juice
Hemorrhoids	Preparation H, Anusol, Tucks, Witch Hazel	Avoid constipation. Report severe pain or bleeding to provider
Diarrhea	Immodium **Only after 12 weeks of pregnancy, no more than 24 hrs	If you have a fever, blood in your stool or diarrhea lasts for >48 hrs, call your provider
Cough, cold and flu	Delsym-particularly for a dry cough at night Robitussin or Robitussin DM, Mucinex, Chlortimetron, Vicks Cough Syrup, Halls, Tylenol Cold & Sinus, Actafed, Neosynephrine or Benadryl **Only after first 12 wks of pregnancy**	Saline nasal spray can loosen nasal mucous that leads to congestion.
Allergy	Chlor-trimeton, Tylenol, Warm salt water gargle, Saline nasal drops or spray, Claritin, Neosynephrine or Benadryl **Only after first 12 wks of pregnancy**	Washing hands and face/showering removes hay fever allergens which reduces discomfort.
Rashes	Hydrocortisone Cream or ointment, Caladryl lotion or cream, Benadryl cream, Oatmeal bath (Aveeno)	
Nausea/ Vomiting	Vitamin B6, Emetrol, Emetrex, Dramamine, Wrist Sea bands	Ginger - comes in tea, candy chews or capsules In general try to eat small frequent meals, avoiding greasy or spicy food
Yeast	Monistat, Femstat, Nystatin, GyneLotrimin	
Lice	Nix	
Scabies	Elimite, Eurax	
Leg Cramps	Calcium Tablets (Oscal, Caltrate, Viactiv)	Increase your potassium intake with bananas and Tomatoes. Stretch your calves before going to bed.

Common medications to avoid during pregnancy: Advil, Motrin, Ibuprofen, Aleve, Naprosyn, Aspirin, Alka-Seltzer, Kaopectate and Pepto-Bismol