

Medication Use in Pregnancy

Unfortunately, for most prescription and over the counter medications, there is little known about the exact effects of taking them during pregnancy. This is because pregnant women are usually not included in safety trials for new medications. Therefore, for most medications, the safety during pregnancy is established by animal studies (which, of course, may not be representative), as well as studies that simply report the experience of women who took the medication in pregnancy, which are limited by lack of a proper “control” group (women who did not take the medication but are similar in all other regards to the women who took the medication).

A good review of medication use in pregnancy can be found on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website www.cdc.gov/pregnancy/meds, as well as the US Food and Drug Administration website www.fda.gov (search “pregnancy”).

MotherToBaby (www.mothersbaby.org) is a service of the Organization of Teratology Information Specialists (OTIS), which is recommended by the CDC as a resource for women looking for more information about the risks of medication use during pregnancy. They maintain safety information for many medications that can be read online or downloaded as a pdf.

The following is a list of common over the counter medications that are generally considered to be safe in pregnancy. However, due to the limitations noted above, no medication is known to be absolutely safe in pregnancy. If you have any questions, please speak with one of our providers.

For Heartburn/Gas/Bloating:

As-needed Antacids (Maalox, Mylanta, Tums, Rolaids)
Antacids taken daily (Pepcid, Tagamet)
Gas-X, Mylicon, Pepto-Bismol

For Cough or Cold:

Expectorants (Guaifenesin, Mucinex, Robitussin DM)
Cough Suppressants (Dextromethorphan, Robitussin Cough, Robitussin Maximum Strength Cough&Cold, Vicks Cough Cough Drops)
Decongestants (Sudafed/pseudoephedrine, Phenylephrine) – **AVOID IF YOU HAVE HYPERTENSION**
Tylenol Products (Combinations of “Cold, Sinus, Flu, Cough, Congestion”) and their generic equivalents -
AVOID THOSE WITH PSEUDOEPHEDRINE OR PHENYLEPHRINE IF YOU HAVE HYPERTENSION

Pain Relief:

Acetaminophen, Tylenol
AVOID IBUPROFEN/MOTRIN/ADVIL/ALEVE unless specifically instructed by one of our providers that it is safe to take

Allergy Relief:

Chlorpheniramine, Loratidine (Claritin), Diphenhydramine (Benadryl), Cetirizine (Zyrtec)
Saline nasal sprays
Steroid nasal sprays
Nonprescription eye drops

Constipation:

All over the counter fiber products and laxatives are considered safe in pregnancy. Generally, start with increased fiber intake and add Colace once or twice daily. If this doesn’t work, use laxatives at the lowest dose needed (to prevent cramping and/or diarrhea).

Diarrhea:

Loperamide (Imodium), Kaopectate

Insomnia:

Diphenhydramine (Benadryl, Tylenol PM), Doxylamine (Unisom)

