

Pregnancy and Medicine

Reviewed by [Nivin Todd, MD](#) on June 21, 2020



Although some medications are considered safe to take during pregnancy, the effects of other medications on your unborn baby are unknown. According to the CDC, about two-thirds of women in the U.S. take one or more prescription [medications during pregnancy](#). Yet most medications have not been adequately studied for their safety during pregnancy. One report notes that more than 90% of the medications approved by the FDA from 1980 to 2000 had insufficient data to determine safety in pregnancy. Therefore, it is very important to pay special attention to medications you take while you are pregnant, especially during the [first trimester](#), which is a crucial time of development for your baby.

An estimated 50% of U.S. pregnancies are unplanned. Therefore, all women of childbearing age should discuss the risks of any medications you take with your doctor, including over-the-counter medications.

If you were taking prescription medications before you became pregnant, be sure to ask your doctor about the safety of continuing these medications as soon as

you find out that you are pregnant. Your doctor will weigh the benefit to you and the risk to your baby when making their recommendations. With some medications, the risk of not taking them may be more serious than the risk associated with taking them.

If you are prescribed any new medication, please inform your doctor that you are pregnant. Be sure to discuss the risks and benefits of the newly [prescribed medication](#) with your doctor before taking the medication.

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Which Over-the-Counter Drugs Are Safe During Pregnancy?

[Prenatal vitamins](#), now available without a prescription, are safe to take during pregnancy. Ask your doctor 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 it is necessary.

The following over-the-counter (OTC) medications and home remedies have no known 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, ask your doctor.

Condition	Safe OTC Medications to Take During Pregnancy*
Allergy	<p>Antihistamines including:</p> <p>Cetirizine (Zyrtec)</p> <p>Chlorpheniramine (Chlor-Trimeton, Efidac, Teldrin)</p> <p>Diphenhydramine (Benadryl)</p> <p>Doxylamine</p> <p>Fexofenadine (Allegra)</p> <p>Loratadine (Alavert, Allegra, Claritin, Loradamed, Tavist ND Allergy, Zyrtec)</p> <p>Nasal spray oxymetazoline (Afrin, Neo-Synephrine) (Check with your doctor first and limit use to a few days.)</p> <p>Steroid nasal spray (Flonase, Nasacort, Rhinocort) (Check with your doctor first, but over the counter sprays are generally safe.)</p>
Cold and Flu	<p>Robitussin (check which ones, some should not be used in 1st trimester), Trind-DM, Vicks Cough Syrup</p> <p>Saline nasal drops or spray</p> <p>Actifed, Dristan, Flonase, Nasocort, Neosynephrine*, Sudafed (Check with your doctor first. Do not use in first trimester.)</p> <p>Tylenol (acetaminophen) or Tylenol Cold</p> <p>Warm salt/water gargle</p> <p>*Do not take "SA" (sustained action) forms or "Multi-Symptom" forms of these drugs.</p>
Constipation	<p>Citrucil</p> <p>Colace</p> <p>Fiberall/Fibercon</p> <p>Metamucil</p> <p>Milk of Magnesia</p> <p>Senekot</p>
Diarrhea	<i>For 24 hours, only after 12 weeks of pregnancy:</i>

	<p>Imodium</p> <p>Kaopectate</p> <p>Parepectolin</p>
First Aid Ointment	<p>Bacitracin</p> <p>J & J</p> <p>Neosporin</p>
Headache	Tylenol (acetaminophen)
Heartburn	<p>Gaviscon</p> <p>Maalox</p> <p>Mylanta</p> <p>Riopan</p> <p>Titalac</p> <p>TUMs</p>
Hemorrhoids	<p>Anusol</p> <p>Preparation H</p> <p>Tucks</p> <p>Witch hazel</p>
Nausea and Vomiting	<p>Doxylamine (in combination with pyridoxine)</p> <p>Emetrex</p> <p>Emetrol (if not diabetic)</p> <p>Sea bands</p> <p>Vitamin B6 (100 mg tablet)</p>
Rashes	<p>Benadryl cream</p> <p>Caladryl lotion or cream</p> <p>Hydrocortisone cream or ointment</p> <p>Oatmeal bath (Aveeno)</p>
Yeast Infection	Monistat or Terazol

Do not insert applicator too far

***Please Note: No drug can be considered 100% safe to use during pregnancy.**

SUGGESTED Symptoms That Happen After CC

Life After You've

Are Alternative Pregnancy Medicine Therapies Safe?

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 their safety and effectiveness in non-pregnant women, much less in pregnant women. Therefore, it is very important to check with your doctor before taking any alternative therapies. They will not recommend a product or therapy until it is shown to be safe and effective.

Safe Alternative Pregnancy Medicine Therapies

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 milligram capsules 4 times a day), and vitamin B6 (pyridoxine, 25 milligram two or three times a day) work well. Ask your doctor about using [Diclegis](#), a pill that combines the antihistamine doxylamine with vitamin B6 to relieve morning sickness.
- **Backache:** [chiropractic](#) manipulation and physical therapy should be considered.

- **Turning a breech baby:** exercise, hypnosis, and traditional Chinese treatment (burning incense-like substance on the fifth toe) have proven beneficial.
- **Pain relief in labor:** epidurals are most effective, but injections of sterile water near a woman's tailbone works surprisingly well, as do immersion in a warm bath, and a high tech nerve stimulator called TENS unit. Relaxation techniques, patterned breathing, emotional support, and self-hypnosis are already widely used alternative therapies in labor.

Alternative Pregnancy Medicine Therapies to Avoid

The following substances have the potential to harm a [developing baby](#) when used in a concentrated formulation (not as a spice in cooking). Some are thought to cause birth defects, and potentially encourage early labor.

- **Avoid these oral supplements:** Arbor vitae, Beth root, [Black cohosh](#), Blue cohosh, Cascara, Chaste tree berry, Chinese angelica (Dong Quai), Cinchona, Cotton root bark, [Feverfew](#), Ginseng, Goldenseal, 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, and thyme.

If you have any doubt regarding the safety of a medication, both traditional and alternative, contact your doctor before taking it.

WebMD Medical Reference

Sources 

SOURCES:

CDC.

ACAAI: "When Pregnancy is Complicated by Allergies and Asthma."

OBFocus: "Medications Considered Safe for Use During Pregnancy," "Loratadine in Pregnancy and Breastfeeding."

Cleveland Clinic: "Medication Guidelines During Pregnancy."

KidsHealth: "Loratadine."

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