

For More Information

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Common Non-Prescription Medications in Pregnancy

Non-prescription medications, sometimes referred to as over-the-counter or OTC medications, are those that can be purchased without having a doctor's prescription. However, it should not be assumed that all OTC medications will be safe during pregnancy.

Before taking any of the medications listed below, women should consult with their health care professional regarding: (i) specific health concerns; (ii) safety of these medications during pregnancy; and (iii) possible interactions with other medications.

When taking medications that have been found to be safe during pregnancy, it is important that women adhere to the recommended doses for which the medications have been tested for safety. Exceeding or otherwise not adhering to the recommended doses could put the baby or woman at risk.

Antacids

Many women experience heartburn, or gastroesophageal reflux, during pregnancy.

It is recommended that women try the following lifestyle changes before seeking further solutions:

- Sleeping upright
- Changes in diet, including eating low fat foods
- Avoiding late night snacking and meals
- Quitting smoking

If these changes do not provide relief, antacids are considered to be safe.

Antihistamines

Antihistamines are safe during the first trimester and are sometimes used to treat morning sickness.

However, some liquid antihistamines or elixirs, contain alcohol and women must be cautioned against using such medications during pregnancy.

Gravol

When taken at the recommended doses, clinical trials have shown the use of Gravol is considered to be safe during pregnancy. However, women wishing to use this medication should first consult their physician.

Cough Syrups

As cough syrups contain varying amounts of alcohol as an ingredient, it is recommended that women consult with their physician before using cough syrups. In general, when taken as instructed, most cough syrups are safe, but it is still best to check with a health care professional as many cough syrups contain alcohol.

Acetylsalicylic Acid (ASA) and Nonsteroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs)

Low doses of NSAIDs including ASA or Aspirin, are sometimes used to treat complications during pregnancy with no risk to the fetus.

ASA must be taken under medical supervision and only as a treatment for specific conditions. Women should consult their health care professional if they wish to take non-prescribed ASA during their pregnancy.

Acetaminophen

Although there have been no known negative effects of acetaminophen when taken at recommended doses, pregnant women should consult their physician before using products containing this ingredient (i.e. Tylenol). As acetaminophen crosses the placental barrier quickly, it is best to use precaution when taking this during pregnancy (Tylenol: Professional Website).

References

Unless otherwise indicated, the information in this fact sheet has been compiled from the Motherisk database available online at <http://www.motherisk.org/women/drugs.jsp>