



Healthy Families Homebirth

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Over-the-Counter Medications

Many presume that because you can buy a medication at the grocery store without a prescription, it is safe to take at any time and for any one. This is not true. Over-the-counter (OTC) are drugs and can harm the fetus. Some medications are safe to use as needed, while others should be avoided completely. Another consideration are the inactive ingredients added to an OTC; the preservatives, colorings, and flavorings may have unattended interactions.

If you are experiencing pregnancy discomforts, please talk to your care provider about it. There may be a safer alternative to resolving the issue. There also may be a time during pregnancy that is safer to take the over-the-counter medicine.

Avoid completely during pregnancy:

Acetylsalicylic acid (Aspirin)	Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, especially naproxen
Cimetidine- antisecretory agent	Sympathomimetics- no known risk expect for phenylpropanolmine
Tretinoin for acne	Excessive amounts of Vitamins A, D, E, C, B3 (Niacin), B6 or B9
Hydrocortisone	Anti-nausea drugs like Unisom and Bendectin

Safe to use sparingly:

*Avoiding all OTCs during the first trimester is advised

*Never exceed dosing instructions on the label

*Be sure to read the labels for the active ingredients- brand names and formulations change

Acetaminophen	Ibuprofen, is okay for very short term use
Expectorants, like Guaifenesin	Antihistamines, especially diphenhydramine is safe; but not brompheniramine
Kaolin/pectin	Bismuth subsalicylate, not for use after month 4 of pregnancy
Simethicone- antifatulent	Docusate salts- laxative
Ranitidine- antosecretory agent	Antacids- magnesium and/or aluminum hydroxide
Benzoyl peroxide for acne	RDA amounts of vitamins
Pediculicides for lice	Antihemorrhoidals that do not contain hydrocortisone

Additional resources may include a family practitioner or a pharmacist.

Books: PDR Family Guide to Over-the-Counter Drugs by the Physician's Desk Reference or The Facts about Over-The-Counter Drugs by Lorrie Klosterman

Websites:

- <http://www.womenshealth.gov/publications/our-publications/fact-sheet/pregnancy-medicines.cfm>

This is general information. Please speak to your health care provider about your unique health needs.



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- <http://www.consumerreports.org/health/prescription-drugs/10-over-the-counter-drugs-to-avoid-during-pregnancy/overview/10-over-the-counter-drugs-to-avoid-during-pregnancy-ov.htm>
- <http://www.aafp.org/afp/2003/0615/p2517.html>
- <http://www.fda.gov/Drugs/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/BuyingUsingMedicineSafely/UnderstandingOver-the-CounterMedicines/default.htm>

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