

Answers to Common Pregnancy Questions

What medicines can I take when I am pregnant?

For headache: Pregnant women are prone to headaches from the rising hormone levels. They also commonly get headaches right after delivery from the dropping hormone levels. You can take Tylenol and Extra-strength Tylenol, and use heat, neck massage and chiropractic adjustment. **NO** Aspirin, Motrin, Aleve, Ibuprofen, Naproxen, or other "anti-inflammatory / NSAIDs". **NO** migraine medications without first discussing them with our office.

For allergies: Benadryl, Claritin, Zyrtec, Chlor-Trimeton, Alavert, Tavist, Xyzal, and saline nose spray. **NO** Sudafed or Allegra, Vistaril, Clarinex. Note that Sudafed is the "D" in allergy medicines such as "Claritin-D". **NO** nasal steroids.

For asthma: Asthma may get better or worse in pregnancy. Although most asthma inhalers are labeled "Category C" (may pose a risk in pregnancy), most doctors agree that an asthma attack / decreased oxygen poses more risks to mom and fetus than the medication.

For a cold: Vitamin C 1000mg a day. Sore throat lozenges, sprays and cough drops. Robitussin cough syrup. Vicks Vaporizers. Saline nose spray. Note that airborne, Echinacea and other herbs have not been studied in pregnancy. **NO** Nyquil, Musinex or other "multi-symptoms cold relievers".

For constipation: Pregnant women are prone to constipation because the hormones of pregnancy slow the movement of the intestines. To prevent constipation the most important thing is to drink enough water: 8-10 glasses a day. You can add one glass of prune juice a day and a fiber supplement / stool softener such as Colace, Surfak, FiberCon, Metamucil, Citrucel. Also Gas-X for Gas. **NO** suppositories or laxatives because they can cause contractions.

For insomnia: Benadryl and Tylenol PM (which contains Benadryl). White noise makers.

For indigestion / reflux: Pregnant women are prone to reflux because the pregnancy hormones slow the transit of food out of the stomach and loosen the muscle between the esophagus and the stomach. In the last trimester the growing uterus also pushes the intestines up against the stomach. Eat more frequent but smaller meals. Avoid spicy foods. You can take Pepcid, Prevacid, Tagamet, Zantac, Tums. **NO** Pepto-Bismol (because it has aspirin).

For hemorrhoids: Pregnant women are prone to hemorrhoids due to constipation and the pressure of the uterus on the blood vessels around the anus. You can use Tucks, Anusol, Preparation H, witch hazel, and do sitz / Epsom salt baths.

For a yeast infection: You can take Acidophilus / lactobacilli probiotics or eat yogurt with "live cultures". After the first trimester it is OK to use Monistat or other over-the-counter yeast medications and use Vagisil for itching.

For poison oak / poison ivy: Benadryl pills and lotions. Avenno lotion and bath flakes.

What vitamins should I take? We recommend an over-the-counter daily prenatal vitamin with DHA/omega fatty acids (which may help with brain development) such as Similac Prenatal, Nature's Made, or Costco and Wal-Mart brands. In your second trimester add a generic calcium 500mg a day and an iron pill such as BiFera. Take your iron and calcium at separate meals, because they can compete for absorption in the stomach.

What can I take for morning sickness? Avoid food which are very hot, cold, spicy or carbonated. Avoid strong odors. "Graze" (eat frequent small meals). Try a "BRAT" diet (bananas, rice, applesauce, toast). Wrist bands sold for morning sickness or seasickness put pressure on an acupuncture point that helps relieve nausea. There are prescription bands that electrically stimulate the same spot; they are not covered by insurance, cost about 100, and last for about 100 hours. Try Ginger capsules 400mg a day and Vitamin B6 100mg a day. If you cannot keep down water, call our office. Some patients require prescription anti-nausea meds, or hospitalization and IV fluids.

Is it OK to get vaccinations when I am pregnant? Pregnant women are at risk for serious complications (even death) if they catch the flu. We recommend a flu shot -- ask for the preservative and mercury free shot. It is OK to get Hepatitis B vaccines and a PPD test when you are pregnant. Do not get any "live" vaccines.

What foods should I eat (and not eat) when I am pregnant? Avoid any uncooked or undercooked meat, and any unpasteurized / partially pasteurized yogurt or soft cheeses, as they can be contaminated with dangerous bacteria. Avoid artificial sweeteners. Eat healthy food. Now is the time to cut out junk food / fast food. Vegetarians need to make sure they are getting enough protein and iron.

Is it OK to drink "just a little" of alcohol when I am pregnant? **NO.** Even small amounts of alcohol may increase the risks of birth defects and fetal alcohol syndrome - with severe birth defects and mental retardation.

What are the risk of smoking tobacco or marijuana, or doing other drugs when I am pregnant? Tobacco and marijuana increase the risk of miscarriage, preterm labor and placental abruption (where the placenta tears away, which can kill mom and baby), and intrauterine growth retardation (IUGR) and stillbirth, because the baby does not get enough oxygen. Cocaine, Methamphetamines, heroin, methadone and other pain pills can also cause these problems, and the baby may be born addicted. Smoking can also cause crib death, asthma, and learning disabilities and attention deficit disorder (ADD).

Is it OK to drink caffeine when I am pregnant? Some studies suggest an increased risk of pregnancy complications.

Is it OK to see a chiropractor or get a massage when I am pregnant? It is OK if your therapist is trained to treat pregnant patients. We recommend Dr. Christina Cosh. Massage therapist should avoid the back of your calves, as some studies suggest there are acupuncture points that could stimulate contractions.

Is it OK to exercise when I am pregnancy? Moderate exercise for up to an hour is OK. Avoid any overly strenuous or prolonged exercise because blood flow is diverted away from the uterus to your muscles. Pregnant women are also prone to over-heating and injury, from lax ligaments and an altered center of gravity. Avoid exercise that has the potential for falls or abdominal injury, including skiing and horseback riding. Avoid sports with significant vibrations such as jet-skiing or waterskiing. Do not start up a new exercise program unless it is pregnancy-specific. The best sports in pregnancy are water sports such as water aerobics and swimming laps.

Is it OK to go swimming or take a warm bath when I am pregnant? Yes, but not once your cervix is dilated.

Is it OK to sit in a hot tub or sauna when I am pregnant? **NO.** This increases your core body temperature, which can be dangerous for the developing fetus.

Is it OK to have sex when I am pregnant? Generally yes, but not if you have a placenta previa, have been experiencing bleeding, a threatened miscarriage, or preterm labor, and not once your cervix is dilated. During pregnancy your sex drive may go up or down. Sometimes sex will cause spotting or cramping.

Should I worry if I bleed or have cramping? If you bleed beyond just spotting, or have severe cramps, call our office.

Should I get an amniocentesis, AFP test, triple screen, quad screen or other testing for Down's syndrome? Your doctor will discuss the risks and benefits of these tests with you.

What if I don't deliver by my due date? Your doctor will discuss the risks and benefits of waiting vs. inducing labor. Most patients have an induction if they have not delivered by 41 weeks.

Who do I call if I have a question after office hours? If you have an urgent problem, call the office and get connected to the answering service. They will page the doctor on call.