

SHEKNOWS Pregnancy & Baby



fertility/ttc pregnancy fetal development baby names labor & birth for moms new baby breastfeeding calendars & tools pb+

PB news | Weird pregnancy | Pregnancy fashion | Celebrity pregnancy | Pregnancy calendar | Baby calendar | Message boards | Newsletters

Parenting Expert
Get the answers to all your parenting questions.
[See more >>](#)

Huggies Pure & Natural® diapers for gentle care.
Rollover to see demo, tips, and more.
huggiespureandnatural.com

Pregnancy & Baby Index: Pregnancy - Health and Wellness: Medications during pregnancy: List of safe and unsafe drugs

Medications during pregnancy: List of safe and unsafe drugs

Go to: [Previous story](#) | [Next story](#)



Elizabeth Weiss McGolerick

Wondering if it is safe to take cold medicine when you are pregnant? What about a safe medication to treat heartburn? It's natural to turn to the medicine cabinet at the first sign of a headache, indigestion or snuffle. But when you're pregnant, you have to think twice about using over-the-counter (OTC) medication. Here are some of the most common drugs pregnant women must avoid and alternative methods of treatment.

A word of caution: Always check with your obstetrician before taking any medication, embarking on exercise routines or getting massage, acupuncture or chiropractic treatment while pregnant.

Pain relievers during pregnancy

Aspirin, ibuprofen and naproxen, found in OTC medications like [Excedrin Migraine](#), Aleve, Advil and Motrin, are common drugs that pregnant women simply cannot take, says Rebecca Kolp, associate director of gynecology at [Massachusetts General Hospital](#).

Also beware of **caffeine** – found in Excedrin Aspirin-Free and Excedrin Quicktabs. Consumer Reports recommends not exceeding 200 milligrams a day to reduce the risk of miscarriage. "The only over-the-counter pain medication that is safe in pregnancy is **Tylenol** (acetaminophen) used in prescribed doses," says Kolp.



Alternative methods to manage pain during pregnancy

There are natural ways to diminish pain. Chinese herbalist and natural wellness specialist Aimee Raupp recommends rubbing peppermint oil on your temples and applying a cold compress on your forehead if you're experiencing a migraine. Tension headaches can be relieved by lying on the floor and massaging the back of your neck with two tennis balls wrapped in a sock.

Consider looking into [prenatal yoga](#) classes to alleviate headaches. Debra Flashenberg, director and founder of the Prenatal Yoga Center, says, "I recommend a slow vinyasa flow, restorative poses and breathing exercises to focus the mind and cleanse the body. For neck strain, gentle head rolls and shoulder-opening poses like eagle pose may be helpful."

For other pains, Raupp suggests hot compresses rubbing comfrey oil on the area that is bothering you. Comfrey is not safe taken orally during pregnancy, but applying topically is fine.

Some moms-to-be may consider chiropractic care to reduce dependency on OTC drugs. Dr. Adam Tanase, a St. Louis chiropractor, says, "Headaches, back and neck pain are due to the physiological strain imposed on the mother's spine. Structurally induced symptoms are best handled through structure-improving methods." Chiropractic care can also reduce the time of labor and delivery and reduce nausea.

Search



Join a due date club or baby board

due date When are you due?

baby board About your baby...

Huggies® Pure & Natural diapers for gentle care.
Rollover and see why.
view demo, tips & more
huggiespureandnatural.com

Pregnancy tools

- Due date calculator
- Chinese predictions
- Ovulation calculator
- Pregnancy calendar
- Due date clubs
- Birth plan creator
- Madame Zaritska
- Birth stories
- Baby development
- Pregnancy tickers
- Find baby names
- See ultrasounds

Tanese suggests pregnant women look for a chiropractor with specialized training in pregnancy care and experience caring for pregnant patients. "These doctors utilize special tables and equipment designed for expectant mothers."

Antacids/laxatives/upset stomach relief

Gastrointestinal complications are common in pregnancy. Digestion slows so the body can absorb more nutrients from food leaving mummies-to-be with indigestion, heartburn, constipation, bloating, gas and irregular [bowel movements](#). Bismuth subsalicylate, found in **Kaopectate** and **Pepto Bismol**, is not recommended says Kolp. "**Mylanta**, **Maalox** and **Tums** in small quantities are acceptable. **Zantac** over-the-counter can be used for heartburn."

Alternative methods during pregnancy

For constipation, Raupp recommends a daily cup of dandelion root tea or a mug of hot water with juice from a lemon. She also suggests a probiotic supplement daily for regular bowel movements and almond milk for heartburn. Do not take castor oil or herbal laxatives like aloe vera, buckthorn, butternut and cascara sagrada.

GI issues can be aided by prenatal yoga. Flashenberg says, "Chest opening poses – anything with the arms over head – will give a sense of elongating the esophagus." Similarly, "Gentle twists, squatting and standing poses such as warrior, triangle pose and extended side angle can help with constipation and gas."

Flashenberg stresses that pregnant women "stay away from any inversion or position where the head is below the heart which will cause the acid to rise up the esophagus."

Cold medicines while pregnant

There's nothing worse than having a cold while pregnant but over-the-counter (OTC) cold, cough or flu remedies are off-limits to pregnant women. They contain brompheniramine (**Dimetapp Elixir**, **Dimetapp Cold and Fever**), chlorpheniramine (**Chlor-Trimeton**, **combination cold and sinus meds**, **sinus allergy meds**, **TheraFlu**) and pseudoephedrine (**Actifed Cold and Sinus**, **Sudafed Nasal Decongestant**, **Triaminic AM Decongestant**). OTC medications like **Claritin** and **Zyrtec** are usually cleared by ob/gyns, but check with your doctor first.

Don't confuse a cold with nasal congestion, something quite common among pregnant moms due to an increase of mucous membranes. "Many women think they have a cold when it's really just dilated blood vessels in the nasal passage which gives that 'stuffy nose' feeling," says Flashenberg. A restorative yoga pose, like the reclined goddess pose (pictured, right), can help.



Alternative methods for cold relief during pregnancy

If you do have the sniffles, "Use a Neti Pot to clear up nasal congestion, flush bacteria from your sinuses and nix a post-nasal drip or sore throat," says Raupp. Eucalyptus steam is another option for congestion, allergies or sinus headache. "Boil water, add four drops of eucalyptus oil, cover your head with a towel and inhale the steam." And don't forget about garlic – a natural antiviral and antibiotic that builds the immune system, says Raupp.

Nicotine patches and gum during pregnancy

If you're a smoker, kick the habit before even becoming pregnant. Products like Nicorette gum and Nicoderm patches are not generally recommended during pregnancy because they come with their own risks because they still contain nicotine which is harmful to your baby.

Nicotine is a chemical addiction and a little trickier to deal with, says Flashenberg. "Committing to a daily practice of yoga will help refocus the mind away from the substance." Flashenberg and Raupp recommend acupuncture treatments as another method to help curb nicotine cravings.

Herbal remedies during pregnancy

Many herbal and natural remedies are safe during pregnancy, but many are dangerous. Raupp advises pregnant women to avoid herbs that affect hormone levels and induce uterine contractions: **borage**, **dong quai**, **licorice**, **cohoosh**, **mistletoe**, **myrrh**, **sage**, **turmeric** and **vitex**. Also, "Avoid herbal energy supplements that contain **ephedra**, **fenugreek** and **ginseng**," says Raupp.

Your clearance to use specific OTC drugs may depend on your trimester. Approach every drug with caution and read labels. Check with your ob/gyn before taking any medication or starting new treatments or exercise. Just because a drug is OTC does not mean it is safe for one and all.

"Popping pills to manage symptoms may allow for temporary improvements, but consider the cost. If these drugs are designed to suspend a mother's bodily functions, what impact will this have on baby's development?" says Talese. "Striving for a healthier pregnancy allows for easier labor and delivery – and a better transition for the baby into this world. Investigate options that support your body's natural abilities to function and to create a team of providers who are supportive of your choices."

Yoga photo courtesy of Deb Flashenberg.

Feature Videos



Safe Medications While Breastfeeding

0:45



Breastfeeding and Taking Medicine

0:53





More on taking medications during pregnancy:

- **In the clear: Safely treating acne while pregnant**
- **Urinary tract infections and your pregnancy**
- **What non-prescription medications can you take for a cold while pregnant?**
- **Should I get the flu shot during pregnancy?**

p&b



You might also be interested in...

-  See hundreds more pregnancy articles and features here at Pregnancy & Baby
 -  How does baby grow? See a fetal development video here!
 -  Get your birth prediction from Madame Zaritska
 -  Meet other moms-to-be on the message boards
-