

Over-the-Counter Drugs during Pregnancy

Keith Merritt, MD

Basics

- Most, but not all, are safe to take during pregnancy
 - For example, always avoid any medicine containing a decongestant
- For others, safety depends on gestational age
 - For example, ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil), Naprosyn, aspirin
- There is no good safety data on some drugs
 - For example, many holistic and herbal medicines
- While some may cure the problem, most only relieve symptoms
- MotherToBaby hotline (**866-626-6847**) can answer questions about the safety of specific drugs during pregnancy

Pain, Headache, Fever

- Acetaminophen (Tylenol) is safe during all parts of pregnancy
- Ibuprofen(Motrin, Advil) is safe up to 28 weeks gestational age
 - Note- some concern about increasing miscarriage rate when taken before 12 weeks gestational age

Migraine Headache

- Difficult since most effective prescription drugs should be avoided
- Acetaminophen(Tylenol) or Tylenol plus diphenhydramine (Benadryl) is safe
- The combination of Excedrin and diphenhydramine(Benadryl) is safe and can be very effective- check with your doctor after 28 weeks gestation

Seasonal Allergies, Hay Fever

- Diphenhydramine(Benadryl), Loratadine(Claritin), Cetirizine(Zyrtec) and Clemastine(Tavist-1) are safe
 - Avoid when combined with D (ex- Claritin-D) or decongestant

Colds

- Avoid any medicine containing a decongestant (most cold medicines)
 - Ex- pseudoephedrine, D, phenylephrine
- Nasal saline washes are safe and effective
- Note- antihistamines(Benadryl, Claritin, Zyrtec) are safe but may delay recovery from the cold & may cause a sinus infection
- Occasional use of Nighttime Nyquil if unable to sleep with a cold is probably safe (be aware- contains a small amount of alcohol)
- If unable to sleep because of cough contact your doctor for prescription medicine

Constipation

- See chapter on “Constipation during Pregnancy”

[Back to Acacia Ob/Gyn Website](#)