

Taking Medicine During Pregnancy

Treating Common Problems

The following pages list helpful treatments for the most common problems people have during pregnancy. These include medicines that may be safe for you. Always tell your care provider about any medicines you take.

If you are thinking about taking a medicine not on this list, please call your provider first. Some medicines are not safe to take during pregnancy.

If there are prescribed medicines that you must take (for diabetes, thyroid problems or seizures, for example), you should keep taking them. Be sure to discuss this with your provider. Your dosage may need to change during pregnancy.

Before taking any kind of medicine, remember:

During the first trimester, try to avoid medicine unless your provider says it's okay. Be sure he or she knows you are pregnant. If you have questions, please call your provider's office.

- Remember that “natural” and “herbal” products are types of medicines. These may not be safe during pregnancy, so please be sure to talk to your provider and/or pharmacist about these products.
- Take all medicines as directed. If you have problems or questions, call your provider.

You can buy all the medicines listed here at a pharmacy. Never use more than the dose shown on the package, and never take it more often than the label tells you to—unless your provider gives you different instructions. If you have questions about which medicine to buy, ask your pharmacist.

The common cold

Rest and drink plenty of fluids. A vaporizer may help.

For aches and fever

- Acetaminophen (Tylenol)
- Other: _____

For sore throat

Gargle with warm salt water. Suck on hard candy, ice or Popsicles. Eat soft, soothing foods. Drink cool or warm liquids. You may also take:

- Cough drops (throat lozenges), such as Halls, Ricola, Cepacol or Chloraseptic.
- Acetaminophen (Tylenol)
- Other: _____

For cough

Avoid products that contain alcohol. You may take:

- Cough drops (throat lozenges), such as Halls, Ricola or Cepacol.
- Guaifenesin (Mucinex, plain Robitussin) for a dry cough.
- Dextromethorphan (plain Robitussin, Delsym) to suppress a cough
- Other: _____

For nasal congestion (stuffy head)

You may take:

- Saline nasal spray
- Afrin nasal spray. **Don't** use this for more than 3 or 4 days.
- Other: _____

Allergies (such as runny nose or sneezing)

- Diphenhydramine (plain Benadryl)
- Chlorpheniramine (Chlor-Trimeton)
- Second generation antihistamines such as Claritin (loratadine) or Zyrtec (cetirizine). **Avoid Allegra (fexofenadine)**
- Other: _____

Flu (influenza) prevention

Flu season (when it is easiest to catch the flu) is October through May. All pregnant people should get the flu vaccine early in flu season, as soon as the vaccine becomes available.

- It is safe to get the **flu shot** at any stage of pregnancy.
- **Don't** get the FluMist vaccine (inhaled through the nose). FluMist contains a live virus.

Headaches, pain and inflammation

Don't take ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin), naproxen sodium (Aleve), aspirin or salicylates without first speaking with your doctor. These may not be safe during all stages of pregnancy.

Instead, you may use:

- Acetaminophen (Tylenol)
- Other: _____

If Tylenol doesn't help your headache, call your care provider. This could be a sign of high blood pressure.

Constipation

(hard, dry stools that are difficult to pass)

Eat more fiber such as whole grains, fruits and vegetables. Drink 10 to 12 glasses of fluids each day (no caffeine). Increase physical activity when possible. You may also take:

- Docusate sodium (Colace) to soften your stools. This takes a day or two to have an effect.
- Metamucil (plain), Effersyllium, Citrucel or Fibercon to increase the fiber in your diet. This takes a day or two to have an effect.
- Miralax. This may take a day or two to have an effect
- Senna (Senokot) or bisacodyl (Dulcolax). This will produce a bowel movement soon after use. **Don't** use it regularly unless directed by your provider.
- Glycerin suppository. This will produce a bowel movement soon after use.
- Milk of Magnesia, for easier bowel movements. This works overnight. **Don't** use it regularly.
- Other: _____

Hemorrhoids

Soak in a tub of warm (not hot) water. Use either an ice pack or a cloth soaked in witch hazel on the area. You might also try:

- Anusol, Anusol HC, Preparation H, Tucks, Americaine, benzocaine, Tronolane
- Other: _____

To help prevent hemorrhoids, avoid straining if you are constipated.

Diarrhea (loose, watery stools)

Drink plenty of fluids (no caffeine). You may also take:

- Loperamide (Imodium AD)
- Other: _____

If diarrhea lasts for more than 24 hours, or if you have contractions, call your care provider.

Heartburn or indigestion

Eat small meals often. Avoid food within two hours of bedtime. Raise your head up with an extra pillow. Try not to wear tight clothing around your waist. Avoid caffeine, chocolate, fat, alcohol, tea, coffee, soft drinks, citrus juices and large meals. You may also take:

- Mylanta, Maalox
- Calcium carbonate (Tums), unless you have a history of kidney stones
- Famotidine (Pepcid AC) or cimetidine (Tagamet)
- Esomeprazole (Nexium), lansoprazole (Prevacid) or omeprazole (Prilosec), only after consulting with your care provider
- Simethicone (Mylicon) for gas pains after surgery
- Other: _____

Heartburn could be a sign of a common but sometimes serious problem (called pre-eclampsia). If these treatments don't help, call your care provider.

Nausea or vomiting (feeling sick to the stomach or throwing up)

Eat small meals often. Drink plenty of fluids (no caffeine). Eat bland foods such as crackers, dry toast, rice or pasta without sauce. Try not to let yourself get too hungry.

Note that prenatal vitamins can cause nausea and vomiting. To decrease nausea and vomiting, always take them with food. It may help to take them in the evening. Ask your doctor about a chewable vitamin. You can also try:

- Ginger root tea
- Sea Bands (acupressure wristbands used for sea sickness, carried by many pharmacies)

If these treatments don't help, ask your provider about:

- Vitamin B6 (pyridoxine). Take 10 to 25 mg every 8 hours.
- Doxylamine (Unisom tablets), **not** "sleep gels." Take 12.5 mg every 4 hours. You may take 25 mg at bedtime.
- Calcium carbonate (Tums), unless you have a history of kidney stones
- Meclizine (Bonine, Dramamine II)
- Other: _____

If you cannot keep any fluids down without vomiting for over 24 hours, call your care provider. You may need to come to the hospital for IV fluids and medicines.

Nausea and vomiting late in pregnancy could be a sign of a common but sometimes serious problem (called pre-eclampsia). If none of these treatments help, call your care provider.

Yeast infections

If you have a yeast infection, you may try:

- Monistat, Gyne-Lotrimin (7-day treatment course)
- Other: _____

If these treatments don't help, or if you have a fever or other symptoms, call your care provider. You may have a more serious infection that needs a different treatment.

To prevent yeast infections:

- Avoid bubble baths, douches, feminine hygiene sprays, deodorant tampons and sanitary pads, and colored or perfumed toilet paper.
- **Don't** wear tight-fitting or synthetic-fiber clothes.
- Wear cotton undergarments.
- Dry your genital area after you bathe or shower and before getting dressed. You might try using a blow dryer on a low, cool setting.
- Wipe from front to back after using the toilet.
- Change out of wet swimsuits or other damp clothes as soon as you can.