

## CHAPTER 4: HAVING A HEALTHY PREGNANCY

# Common Over-the-Counter (OTC) Medications

Limit or use with caution during pregnancy. Do not take any medication without checking with your caregiver. Use as little medication as you can, for as short a time period as possible to reduce the risks.

Drugs and products* containing them with their benefits	Possible side effects and pregnancy risks
<b>For pain or fever:</b>	
Acetaminophen (Tylenol) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduces fever and relieves mild pain.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appears safe in pregnancy, but check with your caregiver.</li> <li>Frequently combined with other ingredients in OTC and prescription drugs, which could lead to overdose.</li> <li>Toxic doses (above recommended dosage) cause liver damage.</li> <li>Risk of child having asthma if you are high risk for asthma and allergies.</li> <li>Possible increased risk of child having ADHD or hyperactivity.<sup>1</sup></li> </ul>
Aspirin <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduces fever and relieves mild pain.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Affects blood clotting and prolong bleeding time.</li> <li>Using within one week of delivery may increase bleeding in you and your baby.</li> <li>Only use aspirin in first and second trimester if prescribed by caregiver.</li> </ul>
Ibuprofen (Advil, Midol) and nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), such as naproxen (Aleve) and ketoprofen <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduce pain, fever, and inflammation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Possible increase in risk of miscarriage.</li> <li>May delay onset of labor and cause lowered amniotic fluid levels.</li> <li>Could cause premature closure of a vessel in the baby's heart, which can lead to high blood pressure for the baby.</li> <li>Do not use in late pregnancy.</li> </ul>
<b>For allergy and cold symptoms:</b>	
Chlorpheniramine (Chlor-Trimeton) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Antihistamine—reduces cold and allergy symptoms (sneezing, itching nose and eyes, etc.).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May be safe in pregnancy, but check with your caregiver before use.</li> <li>Causes slight drowsiness.</li> </ul>
Diphenhydramine (Benadryl) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Antihistamine—reduces cold and allergy symptoms.</li> <li>Reduces itching.</li> <li>Causes drowsiness and promotes sleep.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If taken in last two weeks before birth, can harm baby's developing eyes.</li> <li>Is in Tylenol PM and Advil PM, which are sleep aids.</li> </ul>
Nasal sprays with some antihistamines or cromones (Afrin and Nasalcrom) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduce nasal stuffiness and allergy symptoms.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appear safe in pregnancy and have fewer side effects than antihistamines taken by mouth.</li> </ul>
<b>For cold symptoms:</b>	
Dextromethorphan (Robitussin DM) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cough suppressant.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May be safe in pregnancy, but check with your caregiver before use.</li> <li>Causes drowsiness.</li> </ul>
Guaifenesin (Robitussin) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Common ingredient in Robitussin.</li> <li>Expectorant—reduces cough by thinning mucus.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May be safe in pregnancy, but check with your caregiver before use.</li> </ul>
Pseudoephedrine, phenylephrine, ephedrine, epinephrine, or phenylpropranolamine (Sudafed and Sudafed PE) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decongestants—reduce nasal congestion and stuffiness by constricting blood vessels in the nose.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Raise blood pressure.</li> <li>May decrease uterine blood flow.</li> <li>Avoid during the first trimester if possible, or consult with caregiver before use.</li> </ul>
<b>For gastrointestinal (GI) discomforts:</b>	
Antacids <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduce heartburn and acid indigestion.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Too much calcium (Tums) or other chemicals could lead to constipation.</li> <li>Maalox, Amphojel, and Gelusil appear safe in pregnancy.</li> </ul>
Bismuth subsalicylate (Pepto-Bismol) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Helps relieve upset stomach, heartburn, and diarrhea.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contains subsalicylate, which is similar to aspirin and may cause prolonged bleeding for newborn or you if taken late in pregnancy.</li> </ul>
Bulk-forming laxatives (Metamucil and Fiberall) and Docusate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Treat constipation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appear safe in pregnancy, but check with your caregiver before use.</li> </ul>

Drugs and products* containing them with their benefits	Possible side effects and pregnancy risks
Loperamide (Imodium AD) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Helps stop diarrhea.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>May be safe in pregnancy, but check with your caregiver before use.</li><li>Reduces effect of prostaglandins.</li><li>May delay onset of labor.</li></ul>
Simethicone (Gas-X, Mylanta.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Reduces gas in stomach and bowel.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>May be safe in pregnancy, but check with your caregiver before use.</li></ul>

\* Product names are examples; the list is not intended to be complete.

### *Endnotes*

1. US Food and Drug Administration, "FDA Drug Safety Communication: FDA Has Reviewed Possible Risks of Pain Medicine Use during Pregnancy," last updated January 20, 2015, [http://www.fda.gov/Drugs/DrugSafety/ucm429117.htm?source=govdelivery&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=govdelivery](http://www.fda.gov/Drugs/DrugSafety/ucm429117.htm?source=govdelivery&utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery).