

Pregnancy: A Time for Special Caution

While it may seem obvious, pregnant women should be particularly careful about weighing the risks and benefits of taking medicines. Not all medicines are safe to take during pregnancy. It's worth emphasizing some of the lesser-known reasons for caution:

- Pregnancy may change the way your body processes medications. Pregnant women should ask their health care professional if the dosage should be changed for their medicines.
- Even everyday medicines, such as some over-the-counter pain relievers, can be unhealthy for pregnant women and the fetus at certain points during a pregnancy.
- Many women have serious medical conditions, such as asthma, diabetes, high blood pressure and epilepsy, and they need to take prescription medicine during pregnancy. The risk of stopping a medication could be greater than continuing it during pregnancy. Women should always consult a health care professional before stopping or starting a medicine while pregnant or while trying to get pregnant.
- Women are more vulnerable to



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getting the flu during pregnancy. A flu shot can provide some protection against the flu. Pregnant women should not get the flu nasal spray.

Additionally, as is true for everyone, if you believe a medicine has caused a serious problem, report it to MedWatch, the Food and Drug Administration’s program for safety information and reporting problems with FDA-regulated products.

Getting the Facts

Many women turn to the Internet for information on using medicines during pregnancy. Unfortunately, some online information is confusing and inaccurate. FDA offers a wealth of trustworthy online information.

“We work all year to provide information about health issues of particular interest to pregnant women and welcome National Women’s Health Month each May as a time to remind women of available resources,” said Marsha B. Henderson, assistant commissioner for women’s health and director of the Office of Women’s Health at FDA (www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ByAudience/ForWomen/default.htm).

Henderson encourages women to use these FDA resources to talk with their health care providers about using medicines during pregnancy.

Drug Information (www.fda.gov/Drugs/DrugSafety/PostmarketDrugSafetyInformationforPatientsandProviders/ucm111085.htm): Check the labels on both over-the-counter and prescription drugs for any warnings about use during pregnancy. FDA is planning drug labeling changes in the near future that will provide more information for pregnant women. The new labeling format, which will include data about risks and information from pregnancy exposure registries, is being finalized.

Also, be aware that because pregnant women have generally been excluded from clinical trials that test the safety and effectiveness of new medicines, less data than usual may be available about a given medicine’s safety for the mother and the fetus.

FDA Pregnancy Website (www.fda.gov/pregnancy): The site offers information on medicines, food safety, breast pumps and X-rays. And there is also a lot of information for new moms, as well as links to resources outside FDA.

Pregnancy Exposure Registries (www.fda.gov/pregnancyregistries): Women who must take medicines during pregnancy and breastfeeding can check to see if their medications are among the many medicines that are studied through these pregnancy registries. These registries are intended

to collect information on how FDA-approved medicines may affect the health of pregnant women and their fetuses. Women who enroll in pregnancy registries can help future mothers and their health care professionals learn more about the safety of medicines and help them make informed decisions in safeguarding the health of both the mother and fetus.

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