



Safe Use of Medicines during Pregnancy

Gawade A. S. *, Dr. R. V. Shete, Dr. Krishna Murthy, Mahajan K. C.

Department of Pharmacology, Rajgad Dnyanpeeth college of Pharmacy, Bhor-412206, Pune, Maharashtra, India.

*Corresponding author's E-mail: gawadeashwini15@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

No drug can be considered 100% safe to use during pregnancy. It's best to avoid any unnecessary medication early in your pregnancy during first trimester fetal organs develop rapidly making them extremely vulnerable to the potential risk of drugs. Improper use of medicines may also leads to premature babies' underweight babies & stillborn births & in less desirable cases teratogenicity & birth defects. Some nonmedicinal treatments like prenatal massage can be perfectly safe & helpful during pregnancy other such acupuncture is probably safe, but no one knows for sure. Some OTC products & prescription medicines that are considered low risk for pregnant women.

Keywords: Teratogenicity, Safe medicines, Contraindications, Pregnancy.

INTRODUCTION

Pregnancy, also known as gestation, is the time during which one or more offspring develops inside a woman.¹ A multiple pregnancy involves more than one offspring, such as with twins.⁵ Pregnancy can occur by sexual intercourse or assisted reproductive technology.³ Childbirth typically occurs around 40 weeks from the last menstrual period (LMP).^{1,2} This is just over nine months, where each month averages 31 days.^{1,2} When measured from fertilization it is about 38 weeks.² An embryo is the developing offspring during the first eight weeks following fertilization, after which, the term *fetus* is used until birth.² Symptoms of early pregnancy may include missed periods, tender breasts, nausea and vomiting, hunger, and frequent urination.¹ Pregnancy may be confirmed with a pregnancy test.⁴ The fertilized egg then travel down the fallopian tubes & attaches to the inside of the uterus where it begins to form the embryo & placenta. Teratogens are substances that may cause birth defects via a toxic effect on an embryo or foetus. Teratogens or toxins that affects maternal health or the placenta also affect development a healthy placenta is the mechanism by which the foetus receives nutrition, gas is exchanged & waste is removed. Impairment of these function can lead to cell death.^{6,7,8}

Teratogenic agents:

Radiation, Metals, Thalidomide, Diethylstilbestrol (DES), Ethanol, Cocaine.

Nondrug treatment for pregnant and breast feeding women¹¹

Omega-3 Fatty Acids (EPA & DHA)

Fish oil is still the best source of EPA and DHA (although a vegetarian DHA is available.) The U.S. Pharmacopoeia specifically tests fish-oil products for contaminants. Visit

USP.org for information about specific brands. Recommended dosages are as follows:

- 200-400 mg is the current recommended dosage of DHA for prevention of depression, but dosages of up to 800-1000 mg may soon be recommended
- 1,000 mg EPA for treatment of depression (can be combined with medication and/or DHA)
- U.S. Food and Drug Administration GRAS (generally recognized as safe) Levels:-
:-1500mg DHA
:-3,000 mg DHA/EPA

Light Therapy

Rosenthal, N.E. (2006). Winter blues: Everything you need to know to beat seasonal affective disorder, Revised Ed. New York: Guilford.

Sources for Light Boxes

These are two companies I've found to be reputable.

- The Sunbox Company www.sunbox.com.
- TrueSun.com
www.truesun.com

Exercise

For mild-to-moderate depression

- **Frequency:** 2 to 3 times a week.
- **Intensity:** moderate
- **Duration:** 20 to 30 minutes



For major depression

- **Frequency:** 3 to 5 times a week.
- **Intensity:** 60% to 85% maximum capacity
- **Duration:** 45 to 60 minutes

Psychotherapy

Burns, D. (1992). Feeling good: The new mood therapy. New York: Avon

Cognitive Therapy

- The National Association of Cognitive-Behavioral Therapists <http://www.nacbt.org>.
- Association of Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies (ABCT) <http://www.aabt.org>

Interpersonal Psychotherapy

- International Society for Interpersonal Psychotherapy.
<http://www.interpersonalpsychotherapy.org/>

General Resources

- National Alliance on Mental Illness
<http://www.nami.org>.

To locate a therapist

<http://www.therapistlocator.net>

Medicines that can be used during pregnancy**Table 1:** Medicines that can be used during pregnancy^{9,10}

Common conditions	Safe medicines to taken when pregnant
Allergy	Chlorpheniramine, Loratadine, Diphenhydramine
Cough or Cold	Guaifenesin (an expectorant), Dextromethorphan (Cough suppressant), Cough drops, Vicks vaporub
Nausea & vomiting	Promethazine theoclate, Pyridoxine, Vit. B ₆ tab., Ginger roots
Heartburn gas & bloating, Upset stomach	Antacids -Famotidine, Ranitidine. Simethicone
Pain relief, Headache & Fever	Acetaminophen, Anacin (aspirin free)
Constipation	Fybogel, Lactulose syrup, Bisacodyl or senna, glycerin suppositories, Methyl cellulose
Sore Throat	Gargle with salt H ₂ O
Itching	Hydrocortisone
Pain relief in labour	Epidural injection, Acupuncture

Drugs contraindicated in pregnancy¹²**Table 2:** Various drugs and their indication/contraindications during pregnancy

Drugs	I trimester	II & III trimester
Antihistaminics	Contraindicated	Fenistil can be used
Antacids	Can be used	can be used
Antiflatulent	Disflatyl, flatidyl, semiticone can be used	As 1 st trimester + Primeperoxane
Digestants	Digestine, serpostine can be used	As 1 st trimester
For peptic ulcer	Sucralfate can be used	As 1 st trimester
Antiemetics	Cortagen B6 & Emeral can be used	As 1 st trimester + metoclopramide
Anthelmintics	Absolute contraindications	Contraindicated
Laxatives	Absolute contraindications	Contraindicated
Antidiarrhoeals	Kepect, pectocal can be used	As 1 st trimester
Antispasmodics	Buscopan compsitium + No spa can be used	As 1 st trimester + Merbentyl
Urinary tract infection	Amoxicillin can be used	As 1 st trimester
Antibiotics	Penicillin, Amoxicillin, Ampicillin can be used	As 1 st trimester
Hypotensive drugs	can be used	can be used
Cardiac drugs & Hypertension	Lanoxin, Nitrates, Ca-Channel Blocker	As 1 st trimester
Bronchial asthma	Terbutaline, theophylline, aminophylline can be used	Terbutaline, Beclomethazone can be used
Antipyretics	Only Paracetamol can be used	As 1 st trimester

CONCLUSION

Teratogens are toxic agents that cause abnormal development resulting in birth defects. Many Teratogens are fatal at high doses, causing miscarriage. so pregnant women should always seek medical advice prior to



consume or discontinue any medicines. Excluding Teratogens many other drug safe to use in pregnancy.

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11. www.UppityScienceChick.com and [Breastfeeding MadeSimple.com](http://BreastfeedingMadeSimple.com).
12. <https://www.researchgate.com>

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