

All of us will take medicine at some time in our lives. It is important to talk with your doctor about how your medicine could affect your plans to get (or not) get pregnant. Some of the medicine choices you and your doctor make while you are not pregnant can be different from the choices you make when you are pregnant.

Although medicines are tested for safety, **some medicines may not be safe to take when you are pregnant.** If you think you could be pregnant or are not taking steps to avoid pregnancy, **do not begin any medicines until you talk with your doctor.**

Prescription medicines

If you are already taking a medicine prescribed by your doctor, and are pregnant or thinking about getting pregnant, **talk to your doctor before you stop taking the medicine.**

- In some cases, it may be more harmful to stop taking the medicine than to continue taking it
- It may be necessary to reduce the amount of medicine you are taking or change the medicine for something safer in pregnancy

Over-The-Counter (OTC) medicines

All OTC medicines have a *Drug Facts* label. The *Drug Facts* label is arranged the same way on all OTC medicines to make information about using the medicine easier to find. One section of the *Drug Facts* label is for pregnant women. With OTC medicines, the label usually tells a pregnant woman to speak with her doctor before using the medicine. **Some OTC medicines are known to cause problems in pregnancy.** The labels for these medicines give pregnant women facts about why and when they should avoid the medicine.

Here are some examples:

MEDICINE:	POSSIBLE EFFECTS:
Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®) • Naproxen (Aleve®) • Aspirin (acetylsalicylate) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can cause serious blood flow problems in the baby if used after 28 weeks of pregnancy • In addition, aspirin may increase the chance for bleeding problems in the mother and the baby during pregnancy or at delivery
Seizure Medications (Acutane®) or high doses of vitamin A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can increase the chance of birth defects
Nicotine therapy drugs (like nicotine patch and lozenge)	The labels for nicotine therapy drugs remind women that smoking can cause harm to an unborn child. While the medicine is thought to be safer than smoking, the risks of the medicine are not fully known. Pregnant smokers are advised to try quitting without the medicine first.

Other things like caffeine and herbal medicines can also affect the growing baby. Talk with your doctor about caffeine and the use of herbal products.

Vitamins

Regular multivitamins and prenatal vitamins are safe to take during pregnancy. **All Women should take a daily multivitamin or prenatal vitamin that contains between 400-800 micrograms of folic acid.** Folic acid can help reduce the chance of a baby having a birth defect in the brain or spine.

- Start taking these vitamins before you become pregnant
- The correct amount of vitamins can help your baby, **but too many vitamins can harm your baby.** Look for vitamins that have no more than **8,000 International Units of Vitamin A** in a daily dose

Keep in Mind

- If you are planning to get pregnant, are already pregnant, or not taking steps to avoid pregnancy, do not take any prescription or OTC medication until you talk with our doctor first
- To check the safety of medications go to: www.medlineplus.gov

Provider Instructions

My Next Steps

I will contact my doctor and find out how the medicines I am taking may affect my pregnancy if I get pregnant.

I will talk to my doctor before I start taking any new medicines, including OTC medications, to make sure that the medicine is helpful to me and not harmful to my pregnancy or future pregnancy.

I will take a multivitamin with 400-800 micrograms of folic acid everyday to help me stay healthy and lower my risk of having a baby born with a serious brain or spinal cord defect.

I will never take prescription medicine that is prescribed for someone else. I will only take medicine prescribed to me

References:

Content adapted from the Office on Women's Health in the Department of Health and Human Services -- <http://www.4woman.gov/faq/pregmed.htm>.

This material is for information purposes only and does not constitute medical advice. Materials adapted from "Every Woman, Every Time" developed by Sutter Medical Center Sacramento with funding from March of Dimes CA Chapter and "Healthy Women Florida" developed by the Florida Department of Health, Bureau of Family and Community Health.

"Supported in part by project H5MMC10864 from the U.S Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, Maternal and Child Health Bureau (Title V, Social Security Act)"

