



Medicines for Moms

This guide will answer some of your questions about treating common problems in pregnancy at home. This is not a complete list and we may recommend or prescribe medications not listed here. Please feel free to ask us any questions.

Allergies: 20-30% of women will have rhinitis of pregnancy with nasal congestion and runny nose which occurs as early as 6 weeks of pregnancy and may last through 2 weeks postpartum. This does not respond to medications well; you may try Zyrtec or Claritin.

Many women can stay on their allergy medicine during pregnancy. Safe medications include:

- Benadryl (diphenhydramine) Avoid in 1st trimester, avoid allergens and allergy testing.
- Claritin (loratidine)
- Zyrtec (cetirizine)
- Chlortrimaton (chlorpheniramine) may also help nausea
- Rhinocort- preferred (budesonide), Flonase and Nasonex

Asthma: If you have been given a diagnosis of asthma please see your Primary Care Physician. You may use Singular and Bronchodilators.

Back & Sciatic pain: This is very common in pregnancy. Try hot water bottles, heating pads, baths, or a massage. Back support belts can be found at maternity stores. See “pain relief” for other suggestions. Chiropractic care may also be helpful. The sciatic nerve is the largest nerve in the body, and runs from the buttocks down the back of the legs. It gets very easily irritated in pregnancy and produces sharp pain down the legs which can make movement difficult. Pain relievers and physical therapy can help. You may need to limit your activity.

Calcium: Most prenatal vitamins do not contain all the calcium you need. You need 1200mg of calcium to build your baby’s bones. The extra calcium can come from your diet or a supplement. Through diet, you need 4 servings a day, where a serving is 300mg of calcium. This can be an 8 oz glass of milk, cup of yogurt, serving of cheese, or bowl of ice cream. If you cannot tolerate dairy, try fortified orange juice (350mg) or Viactive chocolate chews (500mg per square). At the end of each day, count how much calcium you had and take the rest from a supplement or Tums.

Colds: Colds are usually caused by a virus, so antibiotics will not help. Instead, treat each symptom.

- Aches: Rest is the best. See “pain relief”
- Congestion: Mucinex* (guaifenesin) to break up congestion. Make sure any old decongestants you have at home do not contain Phenylpropanolamine. Avoid decongestants such as Afrin (oxymetazoline) as they can cause dependence or rebound congestion.
- Avoid oral decongestants during the 1st trimester
- Cough: Use Robitussin* (guaifenesin) with or without DM (dextromethorphan). Be sure it does not contain alcohol. Cough drops are fine.
- Runny nose: Antihistamines work well. See “Allergies” section. Drink plenty of fluids.



- Sore throat: Try cough drops, throat lozenges, or a hot steam vaporizer. Please see your primary care provider if the sore throat persists, as this could be strep throat.

Constipation: The first line of defense is your diet. Eat foods high in fiber, plenty of berries, and drink water or fruit juices (prune is best). Try a prenatal vitamin with a stool softener in it and drink plenty of fluids. Colace and Miralax are also good options. If your constipation is bad, you may use Milk of Magnesia, Dulcolax* (bisacodyl), Fleet enema*, or rectal glycerine suppositories.

Diarrhea: Eat natural constipators, such as cheese and rice. Try over the counter Imodium* (loperamide). If this is not working, ask us for a prescription. Diarrhea causes dehydration, so drink lots of fluids to replenish electrolytes, such as sports drinks or Pedialyte. Do not use Pepto-Bismol.

Fever: Call the office for a temperature above 100.4°F. For lower fevers, use Tylenol (acetaminophen). Increase your fluid intake and rest.

Gas pain: Use products containing simethicone* or mylicon like Mylanta Gas & Magnesium Hydroxide which are safe.

Heartburn: Consider the following options based on the severity of your symptoms.

- For mild heartburn: Tums*, Maalox*, Mylanta*. Aluminum hydroxide & magnesium hydroxide are safe.
- For moderate heartburn: Pepcid (famotidine), Zantac (ranitidine)
- For severe symptoms and prevention: Nexium (esomeprazole) or Prevacid (lansoprazole)
- Do not use Pepto-Bismol (bismuth) or Alka-seltzer (it contains aspirin).

Headaches: Try Tylenol (acetaminophen), but ask us for a prescription if you have migraines. See “pain relief.”

Hemorrhoids: The best way to prevent hemorrhoids is to prevent constipation. If you already have them and they are painful or bleeding, you need to treat them. Sitz baths can be helpful. Ointments are better than creams and they should contain 1% cortisone. Tucks medicated pads (witch hazel) can also help.

Atropic Dermatitis (Itching) : Avoidance measures, emollients and tropical steroids.

Ligament pain: This is most common from 15-20 weeks of pregnancy, and occurs because the ligaments holding the uterus are stretching. These pains are sudden, sharp, and in the lower pelvic area. These are harmless and should resolve quickly. Call us if you have pain that persists or if you develop a fever.

Nausea and vomiting: Try Vitamin B6 (50mg) every 8 hours, with 1/2 (12.5mg) Unisom (doxylamine) or 25mg at bedtime. This may cause drowsiness at first but should improve over time. Ginger and peppermint 2-3 times can be helpful. Ask for a prescription if you begin to lose weight.

Pain relief: Tylenol (acetaminophen) is the only safe over-the-counter pain reliever. See package insert for dosing instructions, and never take more than the recommended amount. If this does not help, ask us about a prescription. NSAID's may be used in certain situations. Limited use of NSAID's may be prescribed between 13-30 wks; as directed by your doctor.



Prenatal Vitamins: Every pregnant woman should take a prenatal vitamin. Over the counter vitamins are fine, but should contain at least 800mcg of folic acid and 200mg of DHA. If your prenatal causes nausea or constipation, please discuss it with us so we can find a solution. Take the vitamin with a meal or at bedtime.

Prescription Medications: Over the course of your pregnancy, you may be prescribed medicine by your primary care doctor, dentist, or other provider. Please call the office to find out if the medication you have been prescribed is safe.

Sleeping difficulty: Women commonly have trouble sleeping in pregnancy. Try one or two Benadryl (25mg) after your first trimester. You can try Unisom (25mg).

Yeast: In pregnancy, you are more susceptible to yeast infections because the body is sweeter. Prevent by avoiding a sugary diet and taking probiotics. If you are on an antibiotic or have a yeast infection, you can take probiotics up to twice a day. Over the counter medications such as Monistat (miconazole) 7 day course, are safe throughout pregnancy.

*Some medications listed are “Category C,” meaning there are no studies proving either safety or harm in pregnancy. Those that are listed have been used for years with good success. Discuss them with us if you have any concerns.

FDA Pregnancy Risk Classification for Pain Management Medications

FDA Classification	Definition
CATEGORY A	Controlled human studies have indicated no apparent risk to the fetus. The possibility of harm to the fetus seems remote.
CATEGORY B	Animal studies have not indicated fetal risk or animal studies have indicated teratogenic risk, but well-controlled human studies have failed to demonstrate a risk.
CATEGORY C	Studies have indicated teratogenic or embryonal risk in animals, but no controlled studies have been conducted in women; there have been no controlled studies in animals or humans.
CATEGORY D	There has been positive evidence of human fetal risk, but in certain cases the benefits of the drug may outweigh the risks involved.
CATEGORY X	There has been positive evidence of significant fetal risk, and the risk clearly outweighs any possible benefits.



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