



## Medicine for Mommies

- **Prenatal vitamins**

- Every pregnant woman should take vitamins—over the counter brands are fine. If you are having a problem taking your vitamins due to nausea, constipation, or some other reason, please let us know. We can find solutions to most problems. Taking vitamins with food or at bedtime can help to alleviate some of these issues.

- **Calcium/Vitamin D**

- You need 1200mg of calcium and 2000 IU of vitamin D every day to help build your baby's bones. Most prenatal vitamins have very little calcium in them, usually 200mg. You can get your calcium from your diet *or* a supplement.
  - Diet – to get all the calcium from your diet, eat or drink at least 4 portions (300mg) daily. A few examples:
    - 8 oz. glass of whole milk or a large portion of cheese
    - A cup of yogurt, preferably full fat and no sugar added (try fresh or frozen fruit instead!)
  - Supplement – your body can only absorb about 500mg at a time, so don't take much more than that at one time
    - *Viactiv* chocolate chews have 500mg calcium
    - Extra strength *Tums* 600mg or regular strength *Tums* 400mg
    - Calcium carbonate tablets 500mg
- When you are brushing your teeth at night (good dental health is healthy for your pregnancy!) add up how much calcium you had that day and make up the difference with a supplement.

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- **Allergies**

- Antihistamines – *Benadryl* (diphenhydramine), *Claritin* (loratadine), *Zyrtec* (cetirizine)
- Remember that many decongestants (*Sudafed*, *Afrin*) can cause rebound congestion.

- **Backache**

- This is very common in pregnancy. Hot water bottles, heating pads, hot baths are helpful, as is a massage from a loving family member or friend.
- Back support belts can be bought at maternity stores.
- Gentle stretching of the lumbar spine can be helpful too, see low back stretches handout.

- **Colds**

- These are usually caused by viruses, therefore, an antibiotic is not helpful in most cases. It is important to rest, increase your fluid intake, and treat symptoms as your body fights the illness.
  - *Sudafed* (pseudoephedrine HCL) oral tablets and *Afrin* (oxymetazoline HCL) nasal spray can help with congestion. In the last month of pregnancy, please ask before using *Sudafed*, as it can increase blood pressure.

- *Robitussin* (guaifenesin) with or without DM (dextromethorphan). Cough drops are helpful. Please call if your cough is severe, you may need a stronger prescription cough medicine or to be evaluated in the office.
  - Antihistamines work well to dry up runny nose (see Allergies). Drink plenty of fluids if you take them, because they can be drying.
  - Hot steam vaporizer at night can help with cold symptoms as well.
- **Diarrhea**
  - Over the counter *Imodium* (Loperamide HCL) is safe to use. If this does not work, please don't hesitate to call us! A prescription for something else can be called in to your pharmacy. Remember also to drink plenty of fluids.
- **Constipation**
  - Should be having daily or every other day soft stools – no straining or pain.
  - Caused by hormones of pregnancy as well as iron in prenatal vitamin. Can look for prenatal vitamins with stool softener already in it.
  - High fiber foods will help move your bowels.
    - Vegetables such as peas, broccoli, artichokes, carrots, sweet potatoes with skin on
    - Fruits such as raspberries, strawberries, apples with skin on, orange, banana, raisins
    - Grains and cereal such as oatmeal, bran flakes, whole wheat bread, brown rice
    - Legumes and nuts such as lima beans, black beans, baked beans, cooked lentils, almonds, pecans, sunflower seed kernels
  - Over the counter stool softeners, safe to take:
    - *Colace* (docusate sodium), 2 capsules daily at bedtime, if not working, can add:
      - *Senna-kot*, 2 tablets daily at bedtime OR *Miralax* packets, dissolve one packet in water daily.
      - Rectal glycerin suppositories are safe if needed.
  - Drink plenty of water, and exercise! Moving your body can literally help move your bowels. Aim to walk at least 20 minutes every day.
- **Fever**
  - For low grade fevers, it is ok to use *Tylenol* (Acetaminophen). If you develop a fever greater than 100.4 F, please call us. Having a fever can cause you to become dehydrated, so make sure to drink plenty of fluids and stay well rested.
- **Gas pain**
  - Use *Mylanta Gas*, *Maalox Anti-Gas*, or any generic brand with Simethicone or Mylicon. Drops, tablets, and gel tabs are all good options.
- **Heartburn or Indigestion**
  - This is very common throughout pregnancy. *Tums* can help—see previous information regarding Calcium. *Maalox* and *Mylanta* are also ok to use. Do not use *Pepto-Bismol* or any other medications containing Bismuth. Avoid *Alka-Seltzer* or any other Aspirin-containing products.
- **Headaches**
  - Very common during early pregnancy. Refer to the information above regarding pain relief.
- **Hemorrhoids**
  - The greatest way to prevent hemorrhoids is to prevent constipation! If you already have hemorrhoids, they might not go away or might even get worse. Therefore, it is even more important to prevent constipation. See section above regarding constipation.
  - If your hemorrhoids are bleeding or painful, you will need to treat them—over the counter hemorrhoid medication is recommended. Ointment is preferred over “cream” as it is a better repellent of water. Make sure the ointment has 1% Cortisone—it has great healing properties and

helps to reduce inflammation. *Preparation-H* is good, but is the most expensive. Witch Hazel Pads (*Tucks* medicated pads) are very helpful in soothing the pain, burning, and irritation associated with hemorrhoids. If your pain is severe, please call us—prescription medication is also available in certain circumstances.

- **Ligament pain**

- This is most common during 15-20 weeks of pregnancy. As your baby grows, the uterus expands, and the ligaments that hold the uterus begin stretching. The pains caused by the stretching are usually sudden, sharp, and in the lower pelvic area. These pains do not last a long time and are harmless. If you are having sharp pains lasting for a long time, or if they are accompanied by a fever, please call us.

- **Nausea and vomiting**

- Unless caused by an illness, these symptoms usually resolve after the first trimester. If your nausea and vomiting are extreme, prescriptive medication is available—please call us.

- **Pain relief**

- ***Tylenol* (acetaminophen) is the only acceptable over-the-counter pain medicine you can take during pregnancy.** This medication is safe for you, and the baby, if taken correctly. Regular strength *Tylenol* is 325mg. The correct dose is: 2 tablets every 4 hours. If you are having severe pain, it is ok to take 3 tablets, but don't make this a regular habit. Extra strength is 500mg and the correct dose is: 2 tablets every 6 hours. Do not ever take 3 extra strength as this could cause liver damage. If severe pain persists, please call us, prescription medication is available.
- NSAIDS, such as Ibuprofen (*Advil*, *Motrin*) are not advised and can be harmful in late pregnancy. Only in certain circumstances do we use them. Do not take NSAIDS unless we advise you to do so.

- **Sciatic pain**

- The largest nerve in the body is the sciatic nerve and it runs from the buttocks down the back of the legs. During pregnancy, it can get irritated easily and cause sharp pains. Although these pains are harmless, they can make getting around more difficult and painful. Pain relievers can help. Physical therapy is indicated with some women and can be quite helpful. Limiting movement and activity can reduce this pain as well.

- **Sleeping problems**

- Towards the end of pregnancy, sleeping might be difficult. *Benadryl* (diphenhydramine) can help. Take 1 or 2 tablets (25mg) an hour before bedtime. This medication is not harmful to the baby and might help you sleep.

- **Yeast**

- During pregnancy, the body produces more sugar and tends to be “sweeter”. Yeast loves sugar! Preventing yeast can be done simply by making a few dietary changes. As with any diet, it is important to avoid sugary things, including drinks and starches. Taking a daily probiotic, such as acidophilus, can help to ward off yeast too. Certain milks and yogurts contain acidophilus—make sure to read your food labels! However, make sure to avoid yogurt with added sugar. Taking a dose of acidophilus once a day is okay, unless you are on an antibiotic or have yeast currently. If that is the case, taking a dose twice a day is advised. If you are experiencing yeast and are in need of medication, all over-the-counter yeast medications are ok to use during pregnancy. However, the yeast prescription pill, *Diflucan*, is NOT safe to take during pregnancy.