



MEDICATIONS: OVER-THE-COUNTER-DRUGS AND PRESCRIBED



Relief for adults – risk for the unborn

Over the next 2 days, 30% of the population will use some kind of over-the-counter drugs (OTC). These are medications bought without a doctor's prescription.

We are used to treating headaches, coughs and other illnesses with medications by pulling a remedy out of the medicine cabinet. But when a couple is planning a pregnancy, the door of the medicine cabinet should not be opening as often! A drug that is safe for an adult may not be safe for a developing baby.

Drugs come in many disguises...

OTC drugs are designed as painkillers, sleep-aids, laxatives and others. Don't be fooled – vitamins and herbal treatments are drugs too. OTC drugs are misleading because they don't need a prescription. And the directions on the label may not apply to pregnant women. They are still serious drugs and a growing fetus can absorb all drugs. Also some OTC drugs can be addictive—painkillers, nasal sprays or laxatives. Even dads need to be concerned. Large amounts of

acetaminophen, for example, Tylenol, can affect a man's fertility. Before you get pregnant, talk to your health care provider about all the drugs, vitamins and herbal treatments that you use.

Drug-test your know-how

Before taking OTC drugs, ask yourself...

- ❖ Why am I taking it?
- ❖ What type of drug is it?
- ❖ Are there limits to who should use it or with what?
- ❖ Am I taking more than the recommended dose?
- ❖ Can it harm my baby if my partner or I get pregnant?
- ❖ Is there something safer that I can do or use?

Drug-free answers for common health problems

Many people face the health challenges below, but the first treatment does not have to be drugs. Here are some alternative suggestions.

Your first steps!

When planning a pregnancy I will...

- ❖ Assume that all OTC drugs could affect the safety of my developing baby.
- ❖ Talk to my health care provider or pharmacist before taking any OTC drug.
- ❖ Read instructions on the OTC drug labels.
- ❖ Keep track of what I am taking and how much.

| SLEEPLESSNESS | PAIN | COLDS OR FLU | CONSTIPATION |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| Exercise regularly | Take a bath or a shower | Reduce activity | Don't put off the "urge" to go to the bathroom |
| Relax – breathe deeply | Relax | Get some rest | Eat a high fibre diet |
| Keep a regular sleep routine | Do simple exercises | Eat a balanced diet | Drink 8-10 glasses of water every day |
| Avoid caffeine, especially after 3pm | Massage | Drink plenty of fluids | Be active every day |
| Avoid nicotine and alcohol | Talk with friends and relatives | Use a cool air vaporizer | Aim for 5-10 servings of fruit or vegetables daily |
| Drink warm milk before bed | Think of something else — book, movie | Gargle with water or suck on hard candy | Choose whole grain cereals and bread |

If you have been taking OTC drugs for an ongoing or worsening problem, you may need medical help.

