

herbal preparations in pregnancy and breastfeeding

The Royal Women's Hospital Drug Information Centre

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Herbal remedies have been used for centuries in many countries for a large variety of ailments. Herbal remedies are being recommended and prescribed more often in Australia by naturopaths, homeopaths, herbalists and other health care practitioners.

This leaflet is intended as a guide only, and the information is based on current knowledge of herbal remedies and their effects.

In all cases, it is advisable that patients seek advice if contemplating the use of any herbal remedy during pregnancy or breastfeeding.

The Royal Women's Hospital Drug Information Centre does not recommend the use of herbal preparations during pregnancy or breastfeeding, due to a lack of documented safety information.

If a herbal preparation is recommended to you, and you are pregnant or breastfeeding, it is important to ask your prescriber about the safety of the preparation for you and your baby.

Herbal preparations should be avoided wherever possible during the first trimester of pregnancy. However, some herbal products may be used after the first trimester. Consult the prescriber for further information.



reasons to be careful

1. Most herbal and homeopathic remedies have not been tested to determine their safety during pregnancy and breastfeeding.
2. Herbal remedies are often quite expensive to buy, and many have not been scientifically proven to be effective.
3. No remedy is a substitute for good nutrition, adequate exercise and plenty of sleep.
4. Herbal remedies have not been proven as safe and effective substitutes for medication prescribed by your doctor.

when and what to avoid

- During the first 12 weeks and the last 12 weeks of pregnancy avoid all herbals.
- If there is a history of threatened or actual miscarriage.
- If there is a history of difficulty in conceiving.
- If there is any abdominal pain.
- If there is any lower back pain.
- Laxative herbs.
- Herbs with a stimulating effect on the uterus.
- Herbs which promote menstruation.

what to avoid during pregnancy

The list of herbal preparations to avoid during pregnancy is fairly extensive. The following are some examples:

Herbals to avoid:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| - Pennyroyal | - Angelica |
| - Senna (in high doses) | - Feverfew |
| - Liquorice (in certain cases) | - Kombucha tea |
| - Dong Quai | - Gingko Biloba |

- Nutmeg (in high doses)
- Mugwort
- Origanum Oil
- Kelp
- Aloes
- Irish Moss
- Savine
- Roe
- Golden Seal
- Parsley in medicinal dosage
- Southerwood
- Buckthorn
- Mandrake
- Autumn crocus
- Thuja
- Echinacea
- Sage (in large quantities)
- Mistletoe
- Juniper
- Blue or black cohosh
- Tansy
- Bryonia
- Barberry
- Male fern
- Rue
- Wormwood
- Broom
- Peppermint (in high doses)
- Blackroot

Vitamins and minerals to avoid:

- Vitamin A (Retinol)
- Vitamin C (at doses of greater than 1000mg daily)

what to avoid during breastfeeding

Some herbal preparations pass through breast milk to the baby and some can cause liver problems in infants. The use of herbs by lactating women should generally be avoided until the baby is over two years old.

Herbals to avoid:

- Dong Quai
- Gingko Biloba
- Nutmeg
- Comfrey
- Coltsfoot
- Butterbur
- Hound Tongue
- Ragwort
- Siberian Ginseng
- Garlic (in large quantities)

Before using herbal preparations during pregnancy and breastfeeding contact your Naturopath, Homeopath or Herbalist and ask for evidence of safety information.