

■ 10 Instructions Pregnant Women Should Follow for Safe and Effective Use of Medication

1. Check whether or not you are pregnant before taking medicines.

Fertile women should check whether or not they could be pregnant and when they are going to have a baby, and consult with an expert at the point of medication.

2. Medication during pregnancy may affect the fetus.

Pregnant women shall be careful when taking any medication, as medicines may adversely affect the fetus by crossing the placental barrier. In some cases, the pregnant woman herself may be adversely affected.

3. Medication guidelines for pregnant women may be different from the guidelines for non-pregnant adults.

Pregnant women must always consider the possibility that a medicine may cross the placental barrier. Doses and changes in guidelines for medication should be considered, as medicines may affect pregnant women differently.

4. Extra care shall be taken in the use of medication from week 3 to week 8.

Impacts of medicines on a fetus may vary according to the stage of pregnancy. Extra care shall be taken during the period from week 3 to week 8 (the 1st of the three stages of pregnancy) as the organs of the fetus are developed in this stage.

5. Medicines are categorized according to their impact on pregnancy.

The FDA has divided medicines into five categories, ranging from Category A, which is the safest medicine for a fetus, to Category X with the highest risks, enabling pregnant women to accurately predict potential harm.

6. Before medication during pregnancy, a pregnant woman should consult with a medical expert.

Pregnant women must consult with a medical expert to determine whether medication is necessary, and seek alternative treatments if possible.

7. Pregnant women with certain diseases must take medicines during pregnancy.

The health of the fetus may be threatened if the mother has epilepsy, high blood pressure or diabetes. Pregnant women with those conditions must take the appropriate dose of their required medication after consultation with a medical expert.

8. For medication during pregnancy, only medicines in wide use should be used.

During pregnancy, it is recommended to only use medicines for treatment that are in wide use. Avoid using newly-developed medicines that have not yet been proven.

9. During pregnancy, you should take only the minimum dose of medication required to achieve the purpose of treatment.

Pregnant women taking medicines should take the minimum dose, for the shortest period of time, to achieve the purpose of treatment. The medicines that are considered to be safest after monitoring the side effects shall be taken with sufficient explanations, and no minor changes shall be neglected during medication.

10. The health of both the expecting mother and the fetus must be considered when administering medication during pregnancy.

The fact that medicines may cause malformation of the fetus and risk the health of pregnant women must always be considered.

■ Guidelines for Medication for Pregnant Women by Symptom

Some pregnant women are prone to colds or headaches, but tolerate the pain out of a mistaken belief that they should completely avoid medicines during pregnancy. On the other hand, some pregnant women have a high level of anxiety about medicine they took before realizing they were pregnant. There are appropriate medications that pregnant women can take for every symptom, and pregnant women may get safe treatment through consultation with a medical expert.

■ Medication for Frequently Development Symptoms during Pregnancy

1. Cold

Q: I caught a cold. Can I take a cold medicine during pregnancy?

A: As most colds are viral, it is better to drink plenty of water and get some rest than to seek special treatment. If you have a high fever or a headache, you should take an antipyretic &

analgesic, such as acetaminophen, to prevent malformation and damage to the neural system of your fetus that can be caused by a high fever during pregnancy.

- **Symptoms**

Pregnant women catch a cold due to viral infections caused by a weakening of immunity during pregnancy. Symptoms include nasal congestion, nasal discharge, cough, laryngitis, fever, headaches and chills.

- **Natural Therapies**

Patients should rest, drink enough water to prevent dehydration and stay in humidified places.

2. Morning Sickness

Q: I have bad morning sickness. Is there any medication to relieve this symptom?

A: Pyridoxine and metoclopramide are relatively safe medicines for morning sickness.

- **Symptoms**

While levels of nausea and sickness, typical symptoms of morning sickness during pregnancy, may vary, about 80% of pregnant women suffer from morning sickness, of which 1% to 3% require hospitalization due to severe dehydration and imbalance of electrolyte. Most morning sickness patients improve in the later stage of pregnancy, but about 20% of patients suffer from symptoms for a longer period of time, with some patients suffering symptoms until the late stage of pregnancy.

- **Natural Therapies**

Patients should work to become emotionally stable, not consume any foods that contribute to morning sickness, and frequently eat small amounts of food. Dried toast or crackers may help. Some patients may vomit if they drink much water, so it is recommended to drink small amounts of water. Acupuncture and ginger tea are known to be good natural treatments for morning sickness.

3. Constipation

Q: I am in the early stage of pregnancy and am badly constipated. Can I take medicine?

A : Yes, most constipation relievers act only on the bowels. As the level of body absorption is

low, it is relatively safer.

- **Symptoms**

In general, constipation is a state of having only two to three bowel movements per week, or less. The causes of constipation include a lack of fiber in the diet, stress, and problems in the gastro-intestinal tract, such as an intestinal obstruction. Constipation during pregnancy is known to result from reduced movements of the smooth gastro-intestinal muscles caused by progesterone and pressures on the intestines as the uterus expands.

- **Natural Therapies**

Increase food consumed by having more fruits and vegetables to relieve constipation.

4. Headaches

Q: I have been experiencing severe headaches during pregnancy. Is there any pain reliever for pregnant women?

A: Your symptoms may be temporarily relieved by taking an antiphlogistic & analgesic, such as acetaminophen.

- **Symptoms**

Pregnant women frequently have headaches during the early stage of pregnancy. The causes include hormonal changes, lack of sleep, changes in blood circulation, hypoglycemia, dehydration, anxiety over the new baby and withdrawal from caffeine. Headaches during pregnancy include tension-type headaches and migraines.

- **Natural Therapies**

Headaches are relieved and the frequency of occurrence decreases when patients rest, regularly exercise and get enough sleep. Massaging the shoulders and covering the face with hot towels may help.

5. Stomachaches

Q: I have a severe stomachache due to gastric ulcer. Is there any medicine for pregnant women?

A: Yes, pregnant women may take gastric mucosa protective medicines such as sucralfate, or ranitidine, gastric antiacids, during pregnancy.

– **Symptoms**

Stomachaches (gastric ulcers) are caused by a scratch in a duodenum or a stomach by gastric juice containing gastric acid and digestive enzymes. Symptoms include indigestion, a stomachache, nausea, sickness, heartburn, gastric-intestinal hemorrhage and intestinal perforation.

6. Pruritus

Q: I am pregnant, and I cannot sleep at night due to pruritus in my whole body. Is there any relief for pregnant women?

A: Yes, the best solution is to moisturize the skin.

Applying moisturizing creams and lotions containing antipruritic agents may help.

– **Symptoms**

Pruritus is the most frequently developed skin symptom during pregnancy. Pregnant women frequently suffer from mild pruritus during pregnancy, and the affected area can expand from the abdomen to the thighs, hips, breasts and arms.

Only 1% to 2% of pregnant women need a check-up for pruritus.

– **Natural Therapies**

Pregnant women shall stay in humidified places to prevent dry skin. Stay away from static electricity and do not use bedclothes that irritate the skin. Do not drink caffeine or alcohol, and do not eat spicy foods. Avoid exposure to hot water.

7. Back pain and pelvic pain

Q: I have not been able to walk well due to back pain and pelvic pain since the mid stage of pregnancy. Is there any pain reliever?

A: Yes. Your symptoms may be temporarily relieved by taking an antiphlogistic & analgesic, such as acetaminophen. You may be recommended to use an appliance by an orthopedic surgeon if your symptoms develop.

– **Symptoms**

80% of pregnant women suffer from back pain and pelvic pain, and some have such pains

from the early stage of pregnancy. Back pain and pelvic pain during pregnancy are usually caused by the weakening of pelvic ligaments and the loosening of the joints that are the result of hormonal changes that take place in the body to prepare for the delivery, as well as the shift in the center of gravity forward due to the growth of the uterus and the fetus.

– **Natural Therapies**

Pregnant women should rest and maintain correct posture by avoiding wearing high heels. Do not sleep lying flat on the floor, and lay on your left side if possible. Rest your feet at higher places and wear a waist support.

8. Sychnuria

Q: Since the early stage of my pregnancy I have been frequently waking up due to sychnuria. Is there any sychnuria relief for pregnant women?

A: Sychnuria is a normal symptom for pregnant women.

If pregnant women suffer from bladder infections and sychnuria, they should take antibiotics such as ampicillin and cefadroxil.

– **Symptoms**

Kidneys get larger and the ureters are expanded during pregnancy. Your higher progesterone level during pregnancy may cause the relaxation of the bladder and the expansion of ureters. In the later stage of pregnancy, your growing uterus may put more pressure on the bladder, causing sychnuria. Diabetes or bladder infection may cause such symptoms.

– **Natural Therapies**

Pregnant women should keep good hygiene to prevent urinary tract infections, and frequently wash their hands to prevent viral infections. Wipe with paper towel fore to back after urination or defecation, and keep your perineum and urethral meatus clean by using liquid soaps.