

Headache During Pregnancy and Breastfeeding

Facts about headaches during pregnancy and breastfeeding

- If you become pregnant or are breastfeeding and normally take pain medications to treat or prevent your headaches, talk to your doctor.
- Pain medications for treatment of headaches should be avoided during pregnancy if possible. See below for more information.
- Preventive medications should be avoided during pregnancy and while breastfeeding. See below for more information.
- If medications are necessary to treat or prevent your headaches during pregnancy or breastfeeding, you will need to make sure your medications are safe for your baby. Changes to your usual medications may be needed.
- Any headache medications used during pregnancy should be taken at the lowest effective dose, for the shortest time necessary.
- For information on headache self-management methods you can use to manage your headaches, see the handout "[What You Should Know About Headache Self-Management](#)". For other non-medical treatment options, talk to your doctor.

What pain medications should I not take to treat my headache while pregnant?

- Throughout your pregnancy, the following should be completely avoided: ASA (e.g., Aspirin[®]), ergot alkaloids, and domperidone.
- It is not known whether triptans are safe during pregnancy. Sumatriptan may be considered if necessary, but talk to your doctor before using it.
- All NSAIDs should be completely avoided in your third trimester (the last three months of pregnancy).

What pain medications are safe to take to treat my headache while pregnant?

- If necessary, acetaminophen (e.g., Tylenol[®]) and metoclopramide are safe at their lowest doses, for short time periods throughout your pregnancy.
- If necessary, ibuprofen (e.g., Advil[®] or Motrin[®]) at its lowest dose for a short time is safe in your second trimester.

Can I take any preventive medications while pregnant?

- Preventive medications should be gradually discontinued prior to a planned pregnancy, or stopped as soon as possible during an unplanned pregnancy.
- If preventive medications are necessary, talk to your doctor about possible options.

What pain medications should I not take to treat my headache while breastfeeding?

- While breastfeeding, ASA (e.g., Aspirin[®]) should be completely avoided.

What pain medications are safe to take to treat my headache while breastfeeding?

- If necessary, the following are safe to take while breastfeeding: acetaminophen (e.g., Tylenol[®]), metoclopramide, domperidone, dimenhydrinate, prochlorperazine, and sumatriptan.
- If necessary, ibuprofen (e.g., Advil[®] or Motrin[®]) is the preferred NSAID while breastfeeding.

Can I take preventive medications while breastfeeding?

- Preventive medications should be avoided while breastfeeding if possible.
- If preventive medications are necessary, talk to your doctor about possible options.

For more information on the topics covered here, see the other info sheets and the full brochure at: www.ihe.ca/research-programs/hta/aagap/headache.