Medications and Pregnancy

The topic of medications in pregnancy often triggers many questions. This is because many medications are not safe to take in pregnancy, and you should always consult your care provider before taking any new medications. In addition, it is best to avoid all medications during the first 13 weeks of pregnancy. With that said, if your symptoms are severe, there are several medications considered relatively safe to use during pregnancy. Listed below are some of the common over-the-counter medications used for treating regularly occurring ailments in pregnancy. Even though these medications are deemed safe, you should only use them when necessary and in short durations.

- **Mucinex® (guaifenisin)**
  Mucinex® is an FDA-approved, over-the-counter, non-drowsy medication that loosens the mucus that causes chest and nasal congestion, and works as a cough suppressant. It is safe to use Mucinex® or Mucinex D® in pregnancy. Do NOT use Mucinex DM® until after 16 weeks (4 months) of pregnancy. Other similar medications which are approved in pregnancy include Sudafed®, Tylenol Sinus®, and Robitussin®.

- **Normal Saline Nasal Spray**
  Nasal saline spray is a great option for anyone who has congestion and wants to clear out their sinuses without medication. It is one of the preferred ways to relieve congestion in pregnancy. It is easy to use and effective, though the effects tend to be short-lived. It can be used to moisten the nasal passages or to irrigate the sinuses. Scott & White’s ENT department highly recommends the name brand Ayr®.

- **Benadryl® (diphenhydramine) and other allergy medications**
  Benadryl® is an antihistamine used to treat sneezing, runny nose, itching and other allergy symptoms. All antihistamines are safe in pregnancy. Benadryl® does cause drowsiness, so you may find it difficult to take during the day; however, it can provide much relief during the evening. In addition to Benadryl®, other allergy medications like Claritin® (loratadine), Zyrtec® (cetirizine), and Chlorpheniramine® are also safe to use in pregnancy.

- **Tylenol® (acetaminophen)**
  Tylenol® is a pain reliever and a fever reducer. Tylenol® is used to treat many conditions such as headache, muscle aches, arthritis, backache, toothaches, colds, and fevers. It is routinely used for short-term pain relief and fever in all stages of pregnancy.

- **Tums®, Rolaids® and Mylanta®**
  Tums®, Rolaids®, and Mylanta® are types of antacids that contain calcium carbonate. Antacids work by neutralizing stomach acid to relieve heartburn, sour stomach, indigestion, and stomach upset. Antacids may also relieve pain from ulcers and gas. Possible side effects of antacids include constipation and bloating. Look for calcium carbonate as the active ingredient when buying generic versions of these medications.

- **Zantac® (ranitidine) and Prilosec® (omeprazole)**
  Zantac® is used to decrease the production of stomach acid, which may reduce irritation to the stomach lining and help heal ulcers and other gastrointestinal conditions. Prilosec® decreases the amount of acid produced in the stomach and is used to treat symptoms of gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), also known as acid reflux. Prilosec® also promotes healing of the esophagus when damage and inflammation have been caused by stomach acid. These two medications are a step up from Tums® and Rolaids®. They should be used to treat daily or recurrent heartburn after antacids have failed to provide relief.

- **Monistat®**
  This medication is a topical, over-the-counter treatment for vaginal yeast infections. It is common to get a yeast infection during pregnancy. A yeast infection is an imbalance of yeast in the vagina. This happens when the “good” bacteria in the vagina cannot regulate the yeast fungus (known as Candida albicans). Without the bacteria monitoring the yeast, it multiplies and further upsets the vagina’s normal condition, resulting in a yeast infection. This happens often in pregnancy because of hormonal changes in the body. Symptoms include: vaginal itching, irritation, or burning, as well as vaginal discharge that may be thick, white and lumpy like cottage cheese.

- **Colace® or Surfak® (docusate sodium) and Metamucil®**
  Colace® and Surfak® are stool softeners that can provide temporary relief from constipation by helping fluids to mix with the stool to keep them from becoming hard or dry. Metamucil® is a type of bulk-forming laxative and fiber supplement. Metamucil® is sold in powdered drink mixes, capsules, and wafers. Metamucil® not only treats constipation, but it can help prevent constipation because of the fiber it contains.