



Using Herbal Remedies Safely in Pregnancy & Labour

Herbal medicine involves the use of chemicals in plants, given as tablets, capsules, creams, ointments & liquids. Many of today's drugs originated from plants, eg the contraceptive Pill was derived from wild yam. **All herbal remedies should be treated with the same respect that you give to drugs: ask your midwife, doctor or herbalist about taking any herbal remedies during pregnancy or labour**

- inform your midwife and doctor if you use any herbal remedies or teas
- avoid herbal remedies in the first 3 months when your baby's major organs are developing
- don't take herbal remedies routinely or for long periods of time
- if you develop any unusual symptoms with the remedies, tell your doctor or midwife
- herbal remedies can interfere with many drugs including those used in labour
- **stop** taking herbal remedies at least 2 weeks before a planned Caesarean or other surgery

Avoid all herbal remedies if you have any medical condition, eg diabetes, epilepsy, heart problems, or if you've had IVF, bleeding in pregnancy, high blood pressure or are expecting twins. Herbal remedies can affect prescribed medicines & may trigger abnormal side effects. If you're prescribed anti-coagulants or other drugs which affect blood clotting, eg aspirin, avoid *all* herbal remedies. If you take ginger for sickness for more than 3 weeks, ask your doctor to check your blood clotting, as ginger thins the blood. If you're due to have any planned surgery you *must stop* all herbal remedies to avoid excessive bleeding during the operation.

Herbs to avoid in pregnancy unless advised by a qualified herbalist: arbour vitae, barberry, basil oil, beth root, black cohosh, blue cohosh, cinchona, clary sage, cotton root bark, fennel, ginkgo biloba, ginseng (Siberian), golden seal, greater celandine, hyssop, juniper berry, marjoram, meadow saffron, motherwort, mugwort, nutmeg, pennyroyal, poke root, rue, sage, squaw vine, St John's wort, tansy, wormwood, wormseed. NB small amounts of fresh or dried herbs used in cooking are acceptable but essential oils used in aromatherapy should be considered as herbal remedies and used with caution.