



Herbal Remedies

Safety of Herbal Medicines in Pregnancy

- *Please inform* your midwife and doctor if you use any herbal remedies or teas
- Avoid herbal medicines in the first three months when your baby's major organs are developing
- *Do not* take any herbal remedies routinely or for long periods of time
- If you develop any unusual symptoms after taking herbal remedies, tell your doctor or midwife
- Herbal remedies can interfere with drugs: if you take prescribed medicines or drugs it is best to stop taking any herbal remedies
- *Stop* taking all herbal remedies at least two weeks before a planned Caesarean section, as many cause blood thinning which can lead to excessive bleeding during the operation
- There are also many herbal remedies which should not be used in pregnancy – so please check



Safety of Raspberry Leaf in Pregnancy

- Raspberry leaf is thought to tone the uterus in preparation for labour, possibly helping to avoid induction of labour, although recent research suggests it may actually prolong pregnancy and labour
- *Avoid raspberry leaf* if you have a history of premature labour or a very rapid labour in a previous pregnancy, or have threatened to go into premature labour in this pregnancy

- *Do not take raspberry* leaf if you have had a previous Caesarean section, if your placenta is lying low down in your uterus, if you have had any pregnancy bleeding, or if you are expecting more than one baby
- If you have a medical condition, or are due to have a planned Caesarean section for a medical reason, there is no indication to take it and it may interfere with other drugs you may need.
- *Avoid raspberry* leaf if you are taking antidepressants
- If you decide to take raspberry leaf, start with just one cup / tablet daily at about 32 weeks of pregnancy – it needs time to take effect so don't leave it until the end of pregnancy
- Allow your body time to get used to the effects for a few days, then increase the dose gradually every few days up to a maximum of 3 – 4 cups / tablets, spread throughout the day
- If you experience strong, painful Braxton Hicks contractions when you first start taking it, reduce the amount of raspberry leaf to a level at which you feel more comfortable
- Please inform your midwife if you take raspberry leaf during pregnancy

Safety of Ginger for “morning sickness”

- Ginger is a well known remedy for “morning sickness” and many studies have shown that it may be effective, but it is not always appropriate or safe in pregnancy
- In Chinese medicine, ginger is a “hot” (Yang) remedy, used to warm people whose internal energies are sluggish and cold (“Yin”). If you are already too “Yang”, ginger will make you feel worse – avoid it if you are hot, irritable, red-faced and constantly wanting cold drinks



- Ginger is generally thought to be safe in pregnancy but research from Finland (2009) suggests that you should use no more than one gram of grated fresh or dry root ginger per day
- If you need to take ginger for more than 3 weeks, inform your doctor: prolonged use affects blood clotting so your doctor may take a blood sample to check for adverse effects
- Taking ginger may make nausea worse and can cause heartburn, so avoid it if your sickness is accompanied by heartburn
- *Avoid ginger completely* if you are taking any prescribed medications, particularly blood thinning (anticoagulant) drugs, including aspirin, or tablets for high blood pressure
- If you are due for planned surgery (including Caesarean section) stop taking ginger (and any other herbal medicines) at least 2 weeks beforehand, to reduce risks of excessive bleeding
- If ginger is appropriate for you, use grated raw root ginger in a tea, and then sip through the day. You can buy ginger capsules, chewing gum or syrup in some health food stores.
- *Ginger biscuits are not the answer* - there is too much sugar (which will make the nausea worse) and not enough ginger to be effective – any temporary relief is due to the sugar
- Ginger beer should also be avoided because of the sugar and alcohol content
- Always inform your midwife if you are taking ginger for “morning sickness”

Always inform your midwife if you are taking any herbal remedies in pregnancy. All herbal remedies should be treated with the same respect that you give to drugs: ask your midwife, doctor or qualified medical herbalist about taking any herbal remedies with prescribed drugs.

For more individualised information on herbal remedies in pregnancy and childbirth, telephone **0906 400 6227** (calls charged at £1.50 per minute, from a BT landline; calls from mobiles and other networks may vary).

