

This information leaflet has been prepared by Denise Tiran, specialist midwife in complementary therapies and is intended as a general guide only. For more information on complementary therapies during pregnancy, visit [www.expectancy.co.uk](http://www.expectancy.co.uk)

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# RASPBERRY LEAF TEA IN PREGNANCY

Information for mums-to-be

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## RASPBERRY LEAF TEA IN PREGNANCY

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### INTRODUCTION

Raspberry leaf is a traditional herbal remedy, often taken in pregnancy to prepare for the birth of the baby. Research suggests that chemicals in the leaves of the raspberry bush tone the smooth muscles of your uterus, helping your body to work more efficiently, possibly preventing you from going past your due date. However, raspberry leaf is not safe for all expectant mums. Taking too much may cause very strong contractions, causing your baby to become distressed. Ultimately, research suggests that taking too much may relax, rather than contract, the muscles of the uterus, therefore prolonging, rather than shortening, pregnancy and labour.

### PRECAUTIONS

If you have any of the following conditions it is wise to avoid taking raspberry leaf tea or tablets during pregnancy:

- Previous Caesarean within the last two years, or if you are due to have a Caesarean for a medical or pregnancy problem
- High blood pressure or pre-eclampsia, especially if you are taking blood pressure medication
- Premature labour in this or a previous pregnancy, or if you experience excessively strong Braxton Hicks contractions
- Previous very rapid labour (less than 3 hours)
- Placenta praevia or low-lying placenta, or unexplained vaginal bleeding in late pregnancy
- If you are expecting more than one baby
- If your baby is breech (bottom-first) or in any other position which is not head-down
- Medical conditions, particularly heart problems, epilepsy, blood clotting disorders, breast or ovarian cancer, endometriosis or fibroids, or if you are taking antidepressants

### RASPBERRY LEAF TEA TO START LABOUR: A COMMON MISCONCEPTION

Many women believe that raspberry leaf can start labour if you are overdue and want to avoid a medical induction of labour. However, raspberry leaf should **never** be used to try to start labour. It is intended as a preparation for birth and should be taken in gradually increasing doses during the last three months of pregnancy. Raspberry leaf, taken in large quantities to start labour, may cause excessively strong contractions and fetal distress.

### SO... IF YOU WANT TO TAKE RASPBERRY LEAF DURING YOUR PREGNANCY, HOW SHOULD YOU TAKE IT?

Raspberry leaf tea, made from the dried leaves and boiling water, is thought to be more effective than tablets. The tablets usually come in 300mg or 400mg doses. Start with just one cup / tablet daily at about 32 weeks of pregnancy. Don't start any earlier than 30 weeks unless it's prescribed by a qualified medical herbalist. Allow your body time to get used to the effects for a few days, then increase the dose gradually every few days until you are taking 3 – 4 cups / tablets, spread throughout the day. If you experience strong Braxton Hicks contractions, reduce the amount to a level at which you feel more comfortable. After your baby's birth, raspberry leaf may help your uterus to return to its non-pregnant state. It may also help to combat infection, enhance your immune system and prevent anaemia as it provides essential vitamins and minerals such as iron.

**REMEMBER:** *raspberry leaf contains powerful chemicals which act in exactly the same way as drugs – just because it is a natural remedy does not mean it is safe for everyone. Please inform your midwife if you take raspberry leaf tea or tablets during your pregnancy, especially if you develop any pregnancy or medical complications.*