

Prescribing tip for information



MHRA Guidance on the Use of Medicines in Pregnancy - Information, Guidance and Resources for Healthcare Professionals

Some medicines are known to be harmful in pregnancy. They may affect the development of the baby or increase the risk of a disability, especially during the first trimester. During this time a woman may not know she is pregnant.

When using any medicine that is known to be harmful in pregnancy advise women of:

- The risks to the baby should pregnancy occur and encourage the use of effective contraception throughout treatment;
- If a woman becomes or wishes to become pregnant, she should be offered information about the risks and benefits to her and her pregnancy of continuing treatment, of moving to an alternative treatment, or of stopping treatment altogether. The risks to the baby of exposure before a woman knew she was pregnant should be discussed.
- Women should not stop using prescribed medication without seeking specialist advice.

Information about whether a medicine must be avoided during pregnancy is available in the patient leaflet that accompanies a medicine. MHRA Drug Safety Update gives information for healthcare professionals on [safety issues for medicines in pregnancy](#).

Contraception:

If a woman is taking a medicine that is known to be harmful in pregnancy, she should be advised to avoid pregnancy during treatment and to use [the most effective contraceptive method for her personal circumstance](#). Performing a pregnancy test before each prescription is one way to avoid unintended exposure to a medicine that may be harmful. See MHRA [guidance for healthcare professionals on frequency of pregnancy testing before and during treatment](#), depending on the chosen contraceptive method.

Pregnancy Prevention Programmes (PPP):

For some of the most harmful medicines, e.g. valproate, and where there is a high risk of unintended exposures, specific requirements may be in place to underline the need to avoid use in pregnancy. A Pregnancy Prevention Programmes is a formal agreement between the patient and their doctor. It makes sure the patient understands the risks to the baby and knows how they should avoid becoming pregnant while on that medicine.

[Women may sometimes need to take medicines to protect their own health and the health of their baby during pregnancy.](#)

Planning a Pregnancy - Advice to give patients who require medication:

- Speak to your doctor, pharmacist, or midwife when planning a pregnancy because some medicines may affect the baby's development. They can advise on the risks and benefits for you and the baby to help you decide what to do.
- If you have a chronic or recurring condition that requires long-term treatment, it is especially important to ask your doctor whether any changes are needed to your medicines.
- Do not stop taking prescribed medicines without talking to your doctor. The benefits of continuing your medication may be greater than any risks.

Report a side effect of a medicine during pregnancy:

Reporting any side effects during pregnancy, including any suspected miscarriage or harm to the baby helps to increase the information available to everyone about the safety of medicines.

How and why to report an adverse reaction

- Drug Safety Update article [explains about Yellow Card reports for pregnancy](#)
- Report side effects via the [Yellow Card scheme](#) website via the Yellow Card App via [iTunes Yellow Card](#) for iOS devices or via [PlayStore Yellow Card](#) for Android devices

Further information is available from the following websites:

[BNF - Prescribing in pregnancy](#)

[Bumps - best use of medicine in pregnancy](#)

[NHS - medicines in pregnancy](#)

Reference: [Use of medicines in pregnancy and breastfeeding - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) accessed 19/04/21

To contact the Medicines Optimisation Team please phone 01772 214302

If you have any suggestions for future topics to cover in our prescribing tips please contact Nicola.schaffel@nhs.net