

Mestemacher Clinic for Women

A Division of

Memphis Obstetrics and Gynecological Association, P.C.

AVOID HERBAL REMEDIES DURING PREGNANCY

If you are pregnant, undoubtedly you are watching what you eat and making sure not to take any medications without first talking with your doctor. But you might think: *“What’s the harm in taking an herbal remedy while I’m pregnant? It’s not like a drug. You get herbs in health food stores. My friend tells me that some herbal remedies, like St. John’s Wort, really make her feel good.”*

Regardless of what you hear, stay away from herbal remedies. A recent report from the University of Michigan Health System warns that you should be just as cautious about taking natural herbal remedies during pregnancy as you are about taking pharmaceuticals.

Herbal remedies have become extremely popular in this country. About \$5 billion worth are sold in the United States every year. However, they are not regulated by the Food and Drug Administration, which classifies herbal products as dietary supplements and not as drugs.

So – unlike prescription drugs – herbal products are not investigated by government agencies before they are marketed. Therefore, not enough research has been done regarding the effects of herbal products on developing babies. Additionally, once they are on the market, herbal products are not all subject to quality control.

During the first trimester (13 weeks) of pregnancy, the baby’s organs are developing rapidly. It is during this time that the fetus is most vulnerable to the harmful effects of external factors. All food, liquids, medications, or other substances ingested by the mother pass through the placenta to the developing fetus.

The best rule to follow during this period is to not take any medications, including herbal remedies. Of course, an exception should be made for anything that your physician deems necessary for the health of you or your baby.

The following is a list of *some* herbal remedies that should be avoided during pregnancy:

Asian Ginseng
Pennyroyal
Blue Cohash
Tansy
Ginger*
Yarrow
Honeysuckle

Echinacea
Ephedra
Camphor
St. John’s Wort
Comfrey
Valerian

Mistletoe
Goldenseal
Black Cohash
Ginkgo
Castor Oil
Yucca

*In small doses, ginger can be taken to relieve morning sickness.