

Herb Use During Pregnancy

Many of the issues and discomforts that occur during pregnancy can be balanced with proper nutrition and a healthy lifestyle. There are some symptoms and circumstances that may require a bit more attention and possibly a remedy.

There are many varieties of herbs and remedies for lots of different situations and it can be overwhelming when trying to figure out what is safe and helpful during pregnancy.

Below is a list of the most common herbs used and how to use them:



Red Raspberry Leaves (RRL) (*Rubus idaeus*)— can be brewed as a tea or made by infusion, this is one of the safest and most commonly used herbs in pregnancy. **Fragrine**, an alkaloid, is a component of the leaves, gives tone to the pelvic muscles and uterus and helps ease the effects of morning sickness. There are many nourishing vitamins and minerals found in **RRL** plants, including a rich concentration of vitamin C, A and B complexes, Vitamin E and some calcium, phosphorous, potassium and iron.

Nettle Leaves (*Urtica dioica*) - can be made into a tea or infusion and is used alternately with **RRL** by many pregnant women, since they have essentially the same effects. **Nettle** is also said to have more chlorophyll than any other herb and the contents of vitamins and minerals encompass most all known for growth and development in human beings. Some vitamins and minerals present in **Nettles** abundantly include vitamins A, C, D and K, calcium, potassium, phosphorus, iron and sulfur.

Dandelion Leaf (*Taraxacum*) - helps to revitalize and nourish the liver and provides kidney support, is a reliable digestive aid, helps reduce swelling and water retention and is used as a treatment for pre-eclampsia. Contains an abundance of potassium, calcium, and iron as well as vitamins A, B complex, C and D.

Red Clover (*Trifolium Pratense*) - supports and nourishes the reproductive system and helps to balance the endocrine system. The leaves and blossoms are rich in calcium, magnesium and trace minerals.

Herb Use During Pregnancy

Saint John's Wort (hypericum) - either topical (oil or gel) or by tincture/capsule (orally) many pregnant women use **STW** for nerve and muscle pain. The oil can be used straight from the bottle or diluted with a carrier oil like coconut or almond oil.

Arnica (Arnica Montana) - used as a homeopathic or gel/oil, arnica is a safe to use anti-inflammatory remedy and pain reliever for minor backaches, sciatica, carpal tunnel, etc...

Witch Hazel Extract (Hamamelis) - used as a topical infusion or homeopathic and is typically used for inflammation associated with hemorrhoids.

Alfalfa (Medicago Sativa) - a mild herb, preferred in teas, however can be used in infusions. **Alfalfa** has an unbelievable amount of protein, vitamins A, D, E, B6 and K, calcium, magnesium, phosphorous, digestive enzymes, trace minerals, iron, carotenes and is the most common source for chlorophyll. Can be used throughout pregnancy to avoid anemia and other mineral and vitamin deficiencies.

Chamomile (Anthemis Nobilis; Matriarca Chamomilla) - used as a tea or infusion most often, **chamomile** should be used sparingly and with caution or not at all for women with spotting in the first trimester or history of miscarriage. **Chamomile** can help with heartburn, insomnia, tension, headaches, cramping and constipation.

Ginger Root (Zingiber Officinale) - a mild tea, infusion, or edible, **Ginger** has been commonly used as a digestive aid and gas expeller. It has the ability to stimulate circulation in the pelvis and throughout the body. Safe for pregnant woman to use once or twice a day.

Lavender (Lavendula Officinalis) - used mostly for teas, some pregnant women find having a **lavender** bath to be very calming and relaxing.

Lavender promotes relaxation and can be combined with Chamomile teas.

Lemon Balm (Melissa Officinalis) - promotes calm, reduces tension and promotes healthy digestion. Can be used as a tea or infusion and added to lavender and/or chamomile teas or prepared alone.



Herb Use During Pregnancy

There are many herbs that are contraindicated for pregnancy and should be avoided, including the following:

Angelica (*Angelica archangelica*)
Barberry (*Berberis vulgaris*)
Black Cohosh (*Cimifuga racemosa*)
Blessed thistle (*Carbenia benedicta*)
Blus Cohosh (*Caulophyllum thalictroides*)
Calendula (*Calendula officinalis*)
Cotton Root (*Gossypium herbaceum*)
Dong Quai (*Angelica sinensis*)
Feverfew (*Tanacetum parthenium*)
Ginseng (*Panax quinquefolium*)
Goldenseal (*Hydrastis canadensis*)
Ipecac (*Ipecac ipechachuana*)
Licorice (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*)
Lily of the Valley (*Convallaria magalis*)
Lobelia (*Lobelia inflata*)
Mugwort (*Artemesia vulgare*)
Pennyroyal (*Mentha pulegium*)
Senna (*Cassia senna*)
Shepherd's Purse (*Capsella bursa-pastoris*)
Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*)

If there is ever a question about a supplement or herb you are interested in, please bring it up with your midwife and do your research. As with anything, everyone's reactions to herbs will vary and have varied effects and outcomes.

Herb Use During Pregnancy

References

Davis, E. (2004). *Heart & Hands: A Midwife's Guide to Pregnancy and Birth*. Berkley, CA: Celestial Arts an imprint of Ten Speed Press.

Romm, A.J. (2003). *The Natural Pregnancy Book: Herbs, Nutrition and Other Holistic Choices*. Berkley, CA: Celestial Arts an imprint of Ten Speed Press.

Weed, S.S. (1986). *Wise Woman Herbal for the Childbearing Year*. Woodstock, NY: Ash Tree Publishing