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Contraception and Medications During Pregnancy

Does Emergency Contraception Work for Everyone?

The European Medicines Agency is taking a look at emergency contraceptives to evaluate data which suggests they may be less effective in women weighing more than 75kg (165lb). There's even evidence that they don't work at all in women over 80kg (175lb). These contraceptives contain a drug called levonorgestrel and the result may be a warning added to the products' label. The US Food and Drug Administration is also assessing the information.

Understand the Risks and Benefits of Medications During Pregnancy

Acetaminophen (e.g. Tylenol®) has a reputation for being a safe drug, used in infants and during pregnancy to manage pain and fever. However, investigators are urging more caution in its use, especially for pregnant women. Use has been associated with the development of ADHD (Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder) in the child. It is hypothesized that acetaminophen may act as a hormone disruptor at a critical point in fetal growth and alter brain development.

Using any medication during pregnancy can carry risk and the benefits of their use have to be weighed carefully against risks – both known and unknown. Different pain medications each carry possible hazards; NSAIDs have been associated with miscarriage, opioids with brain/spine defects and acetaminophen with ADHD. At this time, there is no plan to change the recommendations: always consult your health care provider to discuss the risks versus benefits.

Getting Enough Iodine During Pregnancy

Changes may be coming to some pre/post-natal vitamin products. Recommendations to include or increase the iodine component are coming from endocrinologists. The need for this mineral, important to thyroid function, goes up during pregnancy and lactation and, with the reduction of iodized salt in many diets, there is a greater need to get iodine from other sources. The amount being considered is 150mcg per day.

Your pharmacist may advise caution when it comes to drug use – especially in special populations such as the very young, the elderly and pregnant women. Always consult with them for balanced information for your decision-making.