

Pharmacists issue healthcare advice for new and expecting mums on Mother's Day



This Mother's Day on March 27th the Irish Pharmacy Union (IPU) has issued healthcare tips to pregnant women and new mothers. Many new and expectant parents will have questions during pregnancy, particularly when COVID-19 has resulted in new concerns for parents.

There are several practical tips that can help parents adjust to pregnancy and the breastfeeding period.

Community pharmacist, Rebecca Barry said, "Pregnancy is an exciting time in a parent's life, but it can also be a time filled with uncertainty. Pharmacists frequently receive questions about the safety of medicines in pregnancy and healthcare for new-borns. Pharmacists are available to alleviate the concerns of parents and provide them with any advice they need about pregnancy during the COVID-19 pandemic. Some medicines taken during pregnancy have the potential to reach the baby so it is vital that you take the time to talk to your pharmacist to ensure any medicine you take is safe for you and your baby."

Pregnancy and beyond- Advice from Pharmacists

1. **Folic Acid is recommended even before pregnancy.** A **healthy diet** is especially important if you are pregnant or planning a pregnancy. It's best to get vitamins and minerals from a varied, healthy diet, however it is also essential to take a folic acid supplement which helps to support your baby's healthy development. This is recommended for any woman who might become pregnant and should be taken daily if you are trying to conceive or pregnant.
2. **Smoking while pregnancy is harmful to you and your baby.** Quitting can be difficult, but it is the only effective way to protect both yourself and your baby. Pharmacies can provide advice and a range of treatments to help you kick the habit successfully.
3. **Ensure any medicines you take are safe during pregnancy.** Your pharmacist, GP or midwife can give you advice on whether medicines are safe during pregnancy. It is important not to stop taking prescribed medicines without informing your doctor.
4. **Most medicines can be taken while you're breastfeeding,** including those used to treat postnatal depression. However, there are non-prescription medicines such as codeine phosphate and some nasal decongestants that are not recommended if you're breastfeeding. Always read the medicine information leaflet or check with your pharmacist if you are unsure.

5. **Breastfeeding** takes patience and practice. Because of COVID-19 there are changes in how breastfeeding support is offered throughout communities. However, there is still support available. Check hse.ie for information on supports in your area.
6. **Herbal remedies may not be safe during pregnancy.** It is important not to assume that just because something is labelled as 'natural' that it will be natural and safe for your baby. Always check and if in doubt ask a professional for advice.
7. **Ibuprofen is not recommended during pregnancy.** Despite being a common over the counter pain reliever, ibuprofen should not be taken during pregnancy unless prescribed by a doctor. If you require pain relief, it is better to use paracetamol based products instead and always seek advice from your pharmacist or GP if your symptoms persist.
8. **COVID-19 Vaccinations and Pregnancy.** NIAC recommends that pregnant women should be offered mRNA COVID-19 vaccination at any stage of pregnancy. If you have any questions on COVID-19 vaccines your pharmacist and obstetric care giver will be available to support you.