

Background: A recent article in JAMA (Journal of the American Medical Association)-Pediatrics reported an increased risk of attention deficit hyperactive disorder (ADHD) and related behavioral problems in children whose mothers took acetaminophen during pregnancy. This fact sheet was created to provide perspective on these findings. Although we trust that this information will be useful to pregnant women, women of reproductive age and medical professionals, we emphasize from the beginning that pregnant women and women who might become pregnant should discuss their concerns with their personal health care professional. Only then, can all health information be taken into account to make the best-informed decision on patient care.

What is acetaminophen? Acetaminophen is the generic name for the drug sold as Tylenol. It is also known as paracetamol. Many over-the-counter medications contain acetaminophen including migraine medications and cold/flu medications. Read labels carefully to avoid taking too much.

How was the study conducted? The researchers were part of the Danish National Birth Cohort study, and the study covered more than 64,000 children. Researchers surveyed women during pregnancy and six months after delivery, then evaluated their children seven years later to find out if the children showed ADHD-like behaviors, were diagnosed with ADHD, or were prescribed ADHD medications.

What risks were reported? Women who took acetaminophen for more than 20 weeks and in more than one trimester had a higher risk of having a child with behavior problems.

Does this study prove acetaminophen causes ADHD? Absolutely not. There are many limitations to studies like these. The researchers themselves said more detailed studies are needed. For example, researchers need to find out if the women took other medications or if genetics or other factors might have increased the risk.

Are there times when acetaminophen is recommended for pregnant women? Yes. [Fever of 101°F](#) (38.3°C) or higher during early pregnancy carry many risks for the developing baby. Acetaminophen is the recommended fever-reducing medicine. It has a strong safety record for short-term use and has not been linked to serious birth defects in other studies.

SAFETY REMINDER: Use ONLY the recommended dose. Do not take more medicine than recommended. Do not take the medicine more often than recommended.

Would other pain relievers or fever reducers be safer during pregnancy? No. Scientists report greater risks from regular strength aspirin, ibuprofen (Advil/Motrin), and similar nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medications (NSAIDs). The U.S. Food and Drug Administration also concluded these medications have higher risks for the developing baby.

Are there other ways a woman can protect her developing baby? Many studies have shown a benefit for [folic acid supplements](#) and multi-vitamin supplements for women who became ill and developed fevers during pregnancy. The Teratology Society strongly supports the use of daily vitamin and mineral supplements at the recommended doses for women of reproductive age.

Where can I get more information? First, talk with your health care professional. You can also contact the MotherToBaby hotline to discuss your concerns with an expert in the field. They can be reached at: 866-626-6847. A fact sheet on acetaminophen can be found at <http://www.mothersbaby.org/files/acetaminophen.pdf>. General information on birth defects can be found on the Teratology Society web site at: <http://www.teratology.org/generalpublic.asp>

Source: This information was compiled by members of the Teratology Society who are committed to studying the causes of birth defects and the best ways to prevent them. The Teratology Society includes doctors, scientists and other health care experts who share information on basic scientific research and best medical practices. Find out more at: <http://www.teratology.org>

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