



POISONS AND PREGNANCY

VIRGINIA POISON CENTER



Household Paint Use?

Paint exposures during pregnancy generally revolves around preparing the new baby's nursery or decorating the house before the baby arrives. There are no studies that document the effects of household painting on pregnancy and the developing baby; however, household painting normally involves very low levels of exposure.

- ◆ **Avoid exposure to oil-based and lead-based paints.** Also, minimize exposure to latex paints that contain ethylene glycol ethers and biocides.
- ◆ **Lead based paint was commonly used prior to the 1970s, so pregnant women should avoid removing old paint because of the risk of lead exposure.** Scraping and sanding old paint should be completely avoided. Remove yourself from the location until the project is complete.
- ◆ **Protect your skin** by wearing protective clothing that includes long pants, long-sleeved shirts and gloves.
- ◆ **Provide adequate ventilation** by opening windows and turning on fans.
- ◆ **Limit the time you spend on the project** by taking breaks and move into fresh air frequently.
- ◆ **Keep food and drinks away from the area you are renovating.**
- ◆ **Water colors, acrylic and tempera paints are recommended over oil paints.**

Household Pesticide Use?

Significant exposure to pesticides is a concern for adults, children and expectant mothers. Pesticides and insecticides contain chemicals that are used to attack the nervous system of the insects and cause them to die. During the first trimester of pregnancy, your baby's nervous system is rapidly developing, so you definitely want to avoid any type of contact with pesticides during this time.

- ◆ **Pregnant women should avoid pesticides whenever possible.** There may be a modest risk for oral clefts, neural tube defects, heart defects and limb defects.
- ◆ **Avoid professional pest control services during pregnancy,** especially the first three months when the nervous system of the baby is developing.

Organic & Natural Pesticides

Some pesticides are compounds that are naturally present in plants. Although they sound healthier, the terms organic and natural are not synonyms for *better* or *safer*. All have the potential to cause harm if they are not properly handled. Make sure you read the warning labels on all pesticide and insecticide packages before handling.

Pesticide Use During Pregnancy

1. Don't panic if you have been exposed to a pesticide. Risks generally come from long-term or intense use.
2. If you get a flea / tick repellent on you when applying it to a pet, the risks to your baby are small. Thoroughly wash hands with soap and water or wear gloves during use.
3. The safest plan is to avoid using pesticides or insecticides in your home, on your pets or in the garden during pregnancy. Especially avoid them during the first trimester when the baby's and nervous system is developing.
4. If there must be treatment to your home, your pet, or your garden for pesticides, follow these guidelines:
 - Have someone else apply the pesticides.
 - Leave the area for the amount of time indicated on the pesticide package label.
 - Remove food, dishes, and utensils from the area before the pesticide is used.
 - Wash the area where food is normally prepared following any application of pesticides in the home.
 - Open the windows and allow the house to ventilate after the treatment is completed.
 - Wear protective clothing when gardening to prevent contact with plants that have been treated with pesticides.

Mercury

Seafood is very nutritious and is loaded with great nutrients such as omega-3's, B vitamins and lean protein. But unfortunately, fish can also be contaminated with **mercury** which can affect brain development and the nervous system.

AVOID Eating: Marlin, Orange Roughy, Tilefish, Swordfish, Shark, King Mackerel, Bigeye and Ahi Tuna.

Limit to three 6-oz servings per month: Sea Bass (Chilean), Bluefish, Grouper, Mackerel (Spanish, Gulf), White Albacore Tuna, Yellowfin Tuna.

Limit to six 6-oz servings per month: Striped / Black Bass, Carp, Alaskan Cod, Pacific Croaker, Halibut, Lobster, Mahi Mahi, Monkfish, Perch, Skate, Snapper, Sea Trout, Tuna (canned, chunk light)

Limit to two 6-oz servings per week: Anchovies, Catfish, Clam, Crab, Crawfish/crayfish, Croaker, Flounder, Haddock, Herring, North Atlantic Mackerel, Mullet, Oysters, Ocean Perch, Canned / Fresh Salmon, Sardines, Scallops, Shrimp, Squid, Tilapia, Freshwater Trout, Whitefish, Whiting

Medication Pregnancy Classifications

Pregnancy category ratings are for your health care provider primarily, but you should be informed about the effects of your medications on the developing baby. These ratings along with an evaluation of the risks and benefits of your situation will help you and your health care provider determine what steps to take.

- ◆ **Category A:** Controlled studies show no risk or find no evidence of harm
- ◆ **Category B:** Animal studies show no risks, but there are no controlled studies on pregnant women
- ◆ **Category C:** Animal studies have shown risk to fetus or there are no controlled studies in women or there studies in women and animals is not available.
- ◆ **Category D:** Positive evidence of potential fetal risk, but the benefits from use in pregnant women may be acceptable despite the risk (i.e. life threatening condition to mother)
- ◆ **Category X:** Studies in animals or human beings have demonstrated fetal abnormalities or there is evidence of fetal risk. The drug is contraindicated in women who are or may become pregnant.

Medicine and Pregnancy: Recommendations

Never start nor stop taking a medication while pregnant without consulting your health care provider.

- ◆ **Read the Label** – look for warnings, indications, and expiration dates.
- ◆ **Consult the Virginia Poison Center**, physician or pharmacist about potential side effects and drug interactions.
- ◆ **Organize your medications**
 - ⇒ Do not skip medications – take as prescribed by your physician.
 - ⇒ Do not share medications
- ◆ **Ask Questions** – always ask questions about medication safety for you and your developing baby. You need to know the name, indication, benefits and risks, and problems to watch for.
- ◆ **Keep Records** – keep a record of your current medications, the dose you take and how often you take them.

For more information, Contact the Virginia Poison Center
VCU Health System
Business Phone: (804) 828-4780
Emergency Phone: (800) 222-1222
vapoison.org