Ginger

This sheet talks about using ginger in a pregnancy and while breastfeeding. This information should not take the place of medical care and advice from your healthcare provider.

What is ginger?

Ginger (Zingiber officinale) is a plant that is widely used as a spice and in beverages. The root (rhizome) is the part of the plant that is eaten or taken. Ginger is also used as an herbal remedy. It is used to treat a wide variety of conditions. Ginger is frequently used for morning sickness, motion sickness, upset stomach, or vomiting. As an herbal supplement, ginger is available in pills, capsules, syrups, or it can be included in lozenges. Ginger as part of the diet is not known to pose any problems related to pregnancy or breastfeeding.

Herbal supplements, including those that have ginger in them, are not regulated by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) like prescribed medications. The purity and amount of ginger in supplements may be different than what is stated on the label. Please see the fact sheet on Herbal Products for more information (https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/herbal-products-pregnancy/pdf/).

I take ginger. Can it make it harder for me to get pregnant?

Studies have not been done to see if taking ginger could make it harder for a woman to get pregnant.

Does taking ginger increase the chance for a miscarriage?

Miscarriage can occur in any pregnancy. Ginger has not been found to increase the chance of miscarriage or stillbirth in human studies.

Does taking ginger in the first trimester increase the chance of birth defects?

In every pregnancy, a woman starts out with a 3-5% chance of having a baby with a birth defect. This is called her background risk. Several studies, using an average of 1000 mg of ginger per day, did not find that taking ginger increased the chance of birth defects.

Could taking ginger in the second or third trimester cause other pregnancy complications? Are there any other concerns?

There are very few studies looking at the use of ginger in the second trimester and no studies when it is used in the third trimester. Use in the second trimester was not seen to increase the chance for preterm delivery (delivery before 37 weeks of pregnancy) in one study.

Ginger can affect the way certain medications work. Ginger can interact with some medications that treat blood pressure or those that affect how your blood clots. At high doses ginger can lower blood sugar. This could be a concern for women taking medications to treat diabetes. Taking ginger with certain medications may be a concern in later pregnancy. It may also be a concern with use anytime in pregnancy. If you take a medication and would like to take ginger, it is important to talk it over with your healthcare provider.

Can I breastfeed while eating ginger or take a ginger supplement?

There is no known reason to avoid cooking with and eating ginger in its natural form during breastfeeding. When taken as a supplement for nausea or another condition, there are not enough studies to know if it can pose a risk. Be sure to talk to your healthcare provider about all of your breastfeeding questions.
If a man takes ginger, could it affect his fertility (ability to get partner pregnant) or increase the chance for birth defects?

There have been no studies looking at how a man’s use of ginger might affect his fertility or a partner’s pregnancy. In general, exposures that fathers have are unlikely to increase risks to a pregnancy. For more information, please see the MotherToBaby fact sheet Paternal Exposures at https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/paternal-exposures-pregnancy/pdf/.

Selected References:

- Choi JS, et al. 2015. Assessment of fetal and neonatal outcomes in the offspring of women who had been treated with dried ginger (Zingiberis rhizome siccus) for a variety of illnesses during pregnancy. J Obstet Gynaecol. 35(2): 125-130.