



**MotherToBaby**

Medications & More During Pregnancy & Breastfeeding  
Ask The Experts

**Fact Sheet**

by the **Organization of Teratology Information Specialists (OTIS)**

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## **Ginger and Pregnancy**

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. This sheet talks about whether exposure to ginger may increase the risk for birth defects over that background risk. This information should not take the place of medical care and advice from your health care provider.

### ***What is ginger?***

Ginger (*Zingibar officinale*) is an herb that is widely used as a spice and as an herbal remedy. The root (rhizome) is the part of the plant that is eaten or taken. It is used in cooking, and often found in tea, soft drinks, and in cookies. It can also be taken in pill or syrup form.

Herbal supplements, such as ginger in pill form, are not approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) like traditional medications. Ginger as a food product is not thought to increase risks to a pregnancy. However, pills may vary in concentration and the contents of the pill may not be correctly stated on the label.

### ***What is ginger used for?***

Ginger is used for a wide variety of treatment options. Ginger is commonly used for morning sickness, motion sickness, nausea, upset stomach or vomiting.

### ***Will ginger help my morning sickness?***

You should always speak with your health care provider before stopping or starting any treatment. A review of twelve studies found that taking ginger was effective for treating nausea in pregnancy. However, most studies found that it did not reduce the number of times a pregnant woman vomited. One small study of women with severe vomiting during pregnancy (hyperemesis gravidarum) found that ginger was preferred for greater relief of their symptoms. It is advised that ginger be taken as recommended. The average amount of ginger used in research studies is 1000 mg/day. Ginger should not be used in high doses during pregnancy.

### ***Are there any women who should not take ginger during pregnancy?***

There can be concerns about taking ginger if you are also taking certain medications, including those that prevent blood clotting, or those that lower blood pressure. It is advised that women with a history of miscarriage, vaginal bleeding, a clotting disorder, or who often feel dizzy in pregnancy do not take ginger. Ginger lowers blood sugar so it should be avoided by women with diabetes mellitus that is controlled by insulin/medication.

### ***Could ginger cause or a miscarriage?***

Ginger has not been found to cause miscarriage or stillbirth in any human studies. Several studies, using an average of 1000mg of ginger/day, have found that it can be used for morning sickness without harm to the baby. Herbal treatments can affect or change the reaction of your normal prescription medications. Before you begin any type of herbal treatments, it is important to talk it over with your health care provider.

### ***Will taking or eating ginger during my pregnancy cause birth defects?***

Several studies, using an average of 1000 mg of ginger/day, have found that ginger does not increase the risk for birth defects. Any birth defects that were found in any study were in the expected range of 3-5%, which is no higher than women in the same studies who did not take ginger during their pregnancy.

### ***Can I eat ginger, or take a ginger supplement while I breast feed?***

There has been no research into taking ginger while breastfeeding. It is unlikely that it would affect the breastfed infant,

especially in the amounts typically used in cooking. Be sure to talk to your health care provider about all your choices for breastfeeding.

***Is it a problem if the baby's father consumed a lot of ginger when I became pregnant?***

There has been no studies looking at the effect that ginger has on human sperm. 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 and Pregnancy (<http://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/paternal-exposures-pregnancy/pdf/>).

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