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Miscarriage risk doubles with use of anti-inflammatory drugs

Use of NSAIDs could double risk of miscarriage

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Women who used NSAIDs in first 20 weeks more likely to suffer pregnancy loss, study finds

By

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Common anti-inflammatory drugs such as ibuprofen and naproxen may increase the chance of new study suggests.

Risk of miscarriage more than doubled in women who took non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs first 20 weeks of gestation, according to researchers who scrutinized health records from nearly

The study appears in the latest issue of the Canadian Medical Association Journal.

"I would strongly suggest that women take no non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs during the study co-author Anick Berard, a professor of epidemiology at the University of Montreal and director of research on medications and pregnancy at Centre Hospitalier Universitaire Ste. Justine. "If a woman has a chronic condition she really has to talk to her health care provider to see if it's feasible to stop at trimester."

Use of NSAIDs is fairly common, Berard noted, adding that studies have shown that up to 17 percent take the drugs, either in prescription or over-the-counter formulations. The new study investigated NSAIDs such as ibuprofen, naproxen and other drugs.

However, a leading expert in maternal fetal medicine cautioned women not to overreact to the results. "It's something else that women who took NSAIDs had in common, said Dr. Hyagriv Simhan, associate professor of maternal fetal medicine at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center and medical director of obstetrics at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center.

Don't overreact, expert says

"I wouldn't want this to be a reason for women who have taken a Motrin before they realized the

Beyond this, Simhan said, there are legitimate reasons for women to be taking NSAIDs. "This is a common practice," he added.

The Canadian study compared the medical records of 4,705 women who had a miscarriage during pregnancy with 47,050 women who became pregnant and delivered a child. The women in the study were aged 18 to 40.

Berard and her colleagues considered a woman to have been exposed to an NSAID if she had a prescription for one while pregnant or during early pregnancy. Most NSAIDs in Canada are available through prescription.

Among women who had miscarriages, 352 had taken NSAIDs, compared with 1,213 of the women who delivered a child.

When calculating the risk associated with NSAID use, the researchers accounted for other factors such as diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, asthma, lupus, rheumatoid arthritis, depression, and smoking.

Taking all those factors into account, Berard and her colleagues determined that women who took NSAIDs were 2.4 times as likely to have a miscarriage as those who did not. The rate of miscarriage in women with the normal rate of miscarriage, which is about 15 percent.

While the study didn't address the kind of over-the-counter use of NSAIDs found in the U.S., the researchers noted that the use of NSAIDs during early pregnancy.

"Gestational exposure to any type or dosage of non-aspirin NSAIDs may increase risk of spontaneous abortion during pregnancy," the authors concluded.

NSAIDs may affect prostaglandin levels

The researchers hypothesize that NSAIDs could have an impact on pregnancy because the drug is known as prostaglandins. Normally in pregnancy, prostaglandins decrease in the uterus in a controlled manner. Because these levels to fluctuate, she suggested.

One thing Berard and her colleagues don't know was why the women were given prescriptions for NSAIDs. It's always possible that some of the women who miscarried were taking the medications for other reasons, such as pregnancy loss, he added.

Berard doesn't believe this is the case. Women who had miscarriages generally didn't get more prescriptions for NSAIDs up to their pregnancy losses, she explained.

Previous studies about the impact of NSAIDs in early pregnancy had shown mixed results, Berard said.

Nevertheless, she does allow that this kind of study can't prove that NSAIDs actually cause pregnancy loss.

"We cannot say for 100 percent sure that this is a true drug effect," she said. "But we're one step closer to understanding the finding. And there is at least one other study looking at this specifically that found an increased risk of miscarriage with NSAID use."

*Linda Carroll is a health and science writer living in New Jersey. Her work has appeared in **T** and **SmartMoney**. She is co-author of the new book "The Concussion Crisis: Anatomy of a Sile*

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